



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

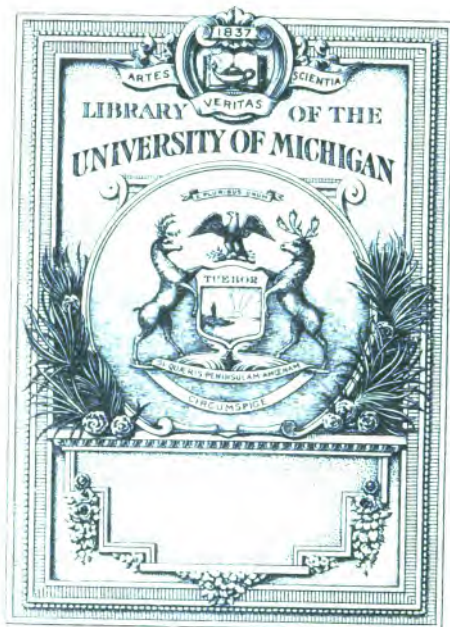
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

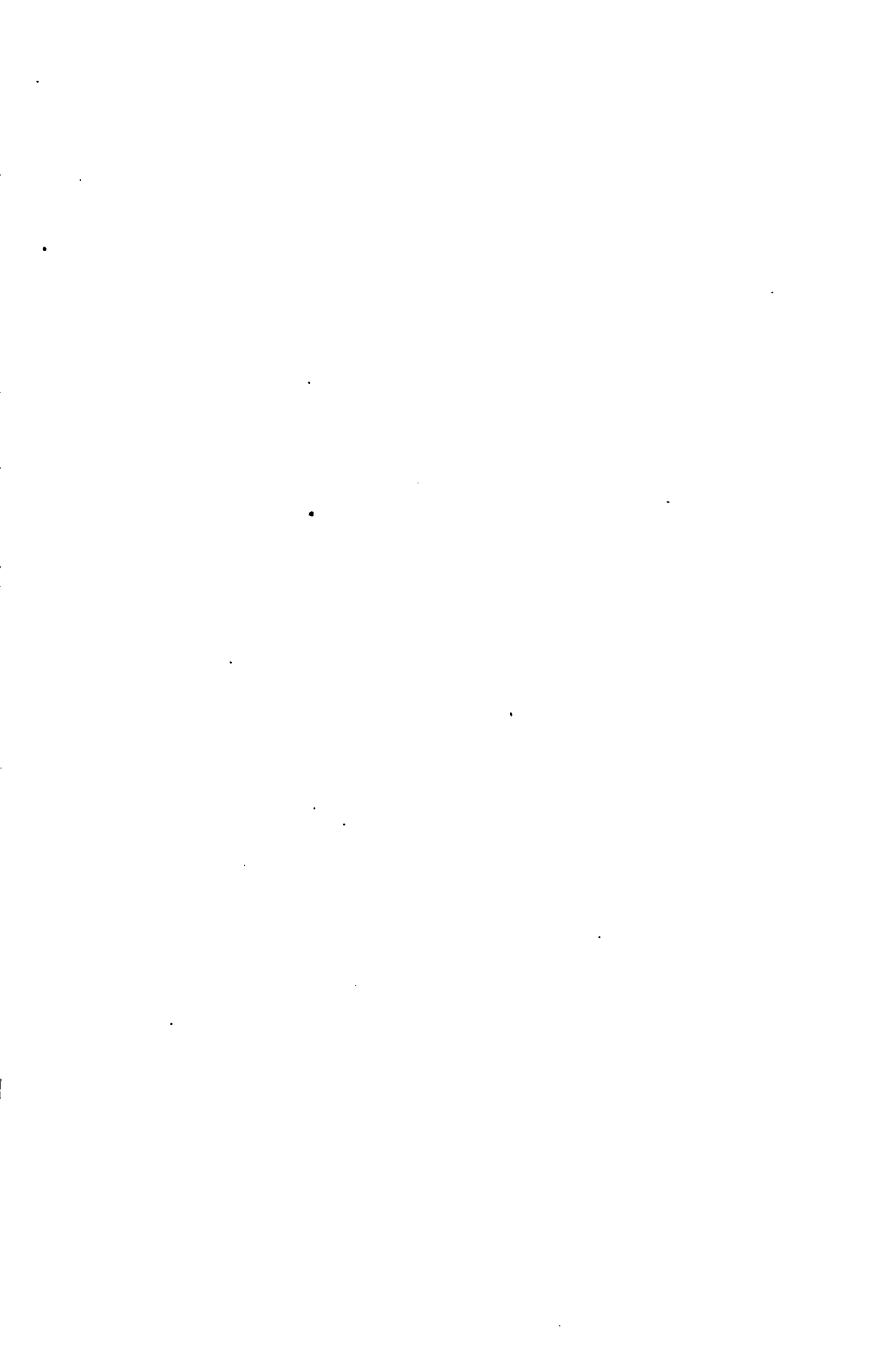
A

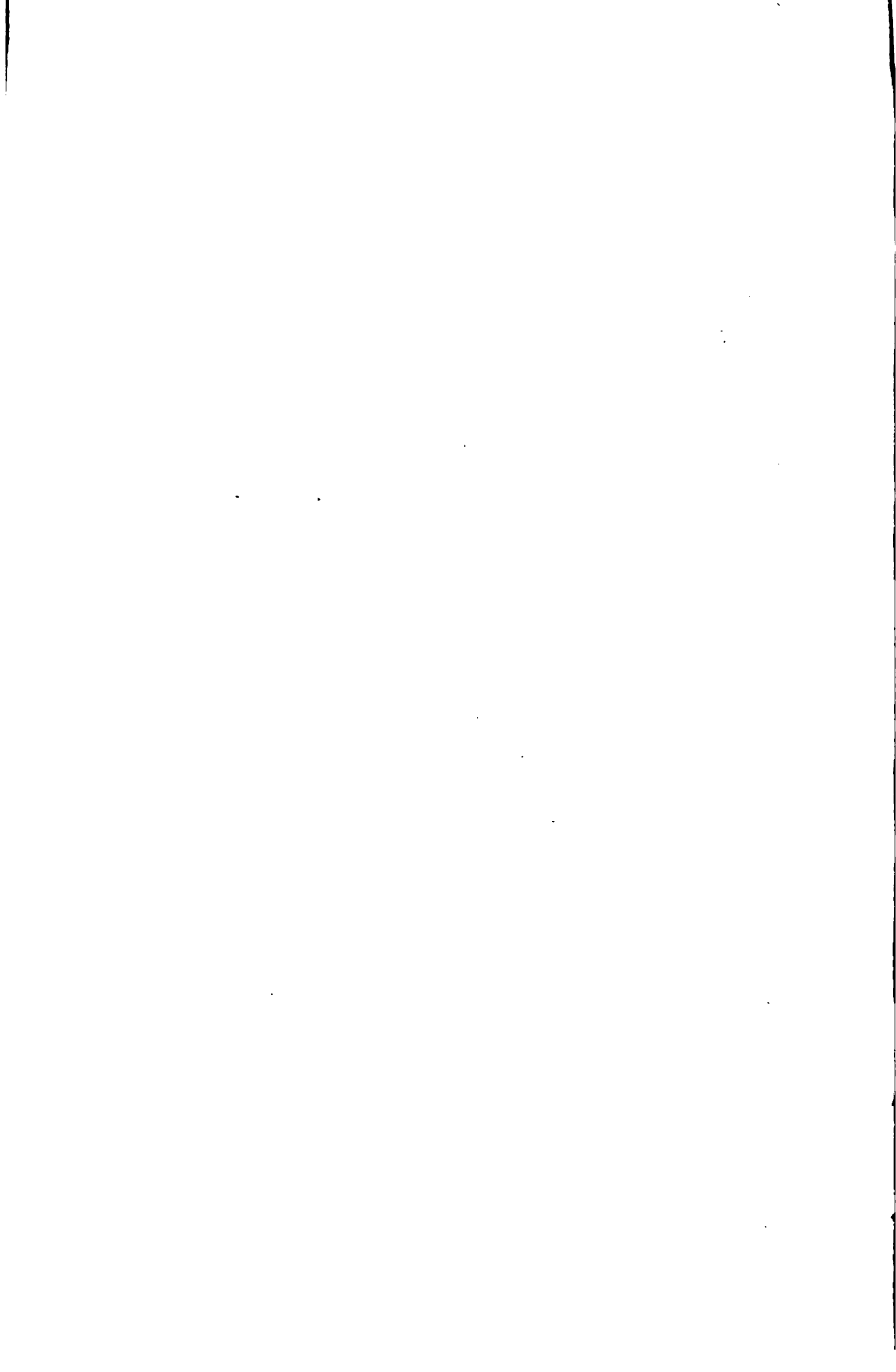
920,261



820.9
H94e







ENGLISH LITERARY MISCELLANY

BY

THEODORE W. HUNT

Professor of English in Princeton University
Author of "English Prose and Prose Writers"
"Literature: Its Principles and Problems," etc.



OBERLIN, OHIO
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA COMPANY
1914

Copyright 1914 by
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA COMPANY

Printed in the United States of America

Published, January, 1914

The News Printing Company
Oberlin, Ohio, U. S. A.

TO
MY COLLEAGUES
IN THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

7

P R E F A C E

THE papers herein presented are discussions within the definite province of English Letters. They are developed along historical and critical lines, and they seek to relate the study of our vernacular literature with the manifest progress of English thought and life. As will be seen, some of the topics treated are of a general, comprehensive nature and range, but are sufficiently illustrated by concrete example to make them intelligible and practically helpful to the literary student, while others are more specific. The articles have all appeared in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*.

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

January, 1914

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

PART FIRST: GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

I.—THE INDEBTEDNESS OF LATER ENGLISH LITERATURE TO EARLIER

Limits of the Earlier Literature	8
<i>A priori</i> , This Dependence Exists	4
More and more Conceded	6
Forms of Indebtedness	7
Literary Vigor	7
Naturalness	10
Sobriety	13
Modern Literary Tendencies—Influences	17
Relation of Literature and Language in the Earlier Eras	18
Attitude of Post-Elizabethan Authors to this Earlier Literature	21
Relativity in Literature	24

II.—THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH PROSE

Relative Origin of Prose and Verse	25
Middle and Old English Prose	26
Theories of Earle, Arnold, and Harrison	26
Sixteenth-century Prose	32
Seventeenth-century Prose	35
The Prose of the Commonwealth and of the Res- toration—Milton and Dryden	36
Eighteenth-century Prose	39
A Specifically Prose Era	40
Emphasis of the Vernacular over the Classical and Continental	41
Origin of Journalistic English and the Novel	42

Nineteenth-century Prose marks the Culmination	45
List of Authors	46

III.—THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LYRIC VERSE

Origin in Human Experience	49
Characteristics	49
Subjective	49
Marks the Union of Subjective and Objective	50
Comprehensive	50
Structure	51
Forms	51
Sacred	51
Secular—Pastoral, Elegiac, Humorous, National, Amatory, Descriptive, Convivial, Ballads and Odes	52
Demonstrative and Reflective Lyrics	53
History of English Lyric	54
Old and Middle English Lyric	54
Lyrical Revival under Henry the Eighth	57
Elizabethan Lyrics—Shakespeare	58
Stuart and Augustan Eras,—Milton	59
Later Georgian Era, Dawn of Naturalism	62
Opposing Factors	64
The Victorian Era	66
Contemporary Lyric	69

IV.—ELIZABETHAN DRAMATIC DEVELOPMENT

The Golden Age Dramatic	71
Taine's Three Conditions—Race, Epoch, Place	71
A Fourth Condition, Personality	75
Reasons for this Development	76
The Revival of Classical Learning	76
Awakening of the National Mind	78
Emphasis of Life	79
Comprehensiveness of the Era	80
Influence of Drama on the Other Forms	80
On the Prose—Shakespeare, etc.	80
The Drama and the Epic—Spenser, etc.	82
The Drama and the Lyric	82

Summary of Contents

xi

Minor Dramatists of the Era	83
Exponents of their Age	85
Skilled in Dramatic Art	86
A Coöperative Body of Authors	87
Shakespeare's Indebtedness to Other Authors	88
A Co-worker in the Drama	93

V.—ENGLISH DRAMATIC VERSE AFTER SHAKESPEARE

A Reproduction of an Earlier Product	96
An Era of Decline in Drama	96
Its Causes	96
The Early Stuart and the Puritan Period	98
Reasons for Decadence	98
Influence of the Better Elements	99
The Puritan Protest	100
The Later Stuart Drama	101
An Era of Reaction	101
Characteristics of Restoration Plays	103
Protest of Collier	105
Work and Influence of Dryden	106
Influence of Milton	107
The Eighteenth-century Drama	109
Dryden's Place and Work	110
An Era of Prose	112
Addison, Steele, Goldsmith, Sheridan	112
The Nineteenth-century Drama	114
An Inferior Order	115
The Contemporary Drama	117

VI.—ROMANTIC ELEMENT IN ELIZABETHAN LETTERS

Romantic Element in Early English Verse	118
Reasons for its Presence in Time of Elizabeth . . .	118
Its Evidences—seen in Verse and Prose	120
Reproduction of Medievalism	120
The Revival of Learning induced it	121

An Element in the English Reformation	125
Conspicuous in the Drama and Lyric	125
Its Effects	127
Imparted New Interest to Elizabethan Letters	127
Furnished New Literary Material	129
Expressed in Prose Fiction	131
Relation of Fiction and the Drama	133
This Romantic Element in Later English Literature	134

PART SECOND: SPECIAL DISCUSSIONS

I.—EDMUND SPENSER AND THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

Relation of Literature and History	139
Spenser's Attitude toward Classical Paganism	141
The Revival of Greek Learning	142
Continental Pagan Influence	143
Spenser's Attitude toward Romanism	144
Exemplified in his Poetry—"The Faerie Queene" and Shorter Poems	145
Spenser's Attitude toward Puritanism and Calvinism	155
Relation of Later English Authors to the Reformation	160

II.—SPENSER AND LATER ENGLISH SONNETEERS

Appeal of the Sonnet to All Authors	163
Spenser's Sonnet Collections	164
"The Ruines of Rome"	164
"The Visions of Bellay"	165
"The Visions of Petrarch"	165
"The Visions of the World's Vanitie"	165
"Amoretti"	165
Milton	167
Wordsworth	170
Later Sonneteers—Keats, Coleridge, Arnold, Rossetti, Mrs. Browning	181

III.—THE SONNETS OF SHAKESPEARE

Origin and History of the English Sonnet	193
Absence in Chaucer—Reasons	194

Summary of Contents

xiii

Nature and Structure	195
Special Interest in Shakespeare's Sonnets	198
Their Number	198
Date	198
To Whom Addressed	198
Authorship	199
Autobiographical Character	199
Relation to Each Other	200
Classification	200
Purpose	201
Poetic Quality	204
Open Questions	208
The Rival Poet	209
The "Dark-haired" Woman	209
Personal Character of the Author	209
Effect on the Author's Fame	210

IV.—THE POETRY OF COLERIDGE

Life and Character of Coleridge	213
His Poetry	220
Characteristic Defects of His Verse	224
Political Type	224
Lack of Poetic Instinct	226
Fragmentary Nature	227
Merits of His Verse	228
Poetic Diction of High Type	228
Mystical Elements	229
Emphasis of Nature	231
Rebuke of Civic Wrong	233

V.—THE POETRY OF WORDSWORTH

His Theory of Poetry	236
His View of Nature	241
Characteristics of His Verse	248
Ethical Type	248
Emotional Element	254
Intellectual Vigor	259
Defects of His Verse	264
His Place in English Verse	267

VI.—TENNYSON'S "IDYLLS OF THE KING"

The Fitness of the Term "Idyll"	271
The Origin of the Poem	272
Its Structure or Plan	274
Its Teaching, Primary and Subordinate	279
Features of Style, Method, Scope	282
Diction	282
Dramatic Element	286
Medieval and Modern	288
Lyric Excellence	289
Defects of the Poem	291
The Poet's Permanent Place and Fame	292

VII.—TENNYSON'S "IN MEMORIAM"

Its Occasion	296
Its Structure	297
Its Purpose	301
Its Relation to the Time	303
Its Relation to Other Poems of the Author	306
Its Special Qualities	309
Its Poetic Form combines Intellect and Art	311
Its Relation to Man, and the Author's Personality	316
Its Latent Meaning	317

PART FIRST

GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

I

THE INDEBTEDNESS OF LATER ENGLISH LITER- ATURE TO EARLIER

CHRONOLOGICALLY viewed, we mean by our "earlier" literature that portion of it lying between the "Paraphrase" of Cædmon, in the seventh century, and the Revival of Learning, in the sixteenth, — a period, in so far as time is concerned, of nine centuries, as compared with the more than three centuries that have passed since the days of Elizabeth. It is naturally divisible into the Old English Period, from Cædmon to the Norman Conquest of 1066, or to the close of the "Chronicle," in 1154, and the Age of Chaucer, 1350, to the days of Henry the Eighth, and the opening of the reign of Elizabeth, in 1558. No careful student of what may be called the Historical Development of English Letters can fail, at the very outset of his inquiries, to institute the question now suggested, What is the chronological and logical relation of these several centuries to each other, — the later to the earlier, the progressive and settled to the initial and formative, and

to what degree in particular may the one be said to be dependent on the other?

We notice, first of all, that, *a priori*, there must exist this historical order, and that it must be studied as an essential factor in literary interpretation. That is but a partial and unscholarly examination of any subject which begins midway in the series of developments that it includes. There is such a thing as historical unity and continuity in literature, a well-established law of sequence as vital in its place and action as in any sphere of liberal study or social and civic order. The classical ages of Pericles and Augustus cannot be rationally interpreted apart from a knowledge of antecedent Greek and Roman letters. It would not be in order to open the investigation of Italian letters with Ariosto or even with Petrarch, nor that of France and Germany with Racine and Klopstock. None the less safely can the English student begin with Spenser and Shakespeare and begin aright. The study of the Periclean and Augustan eras, representative as they were, and because representative, must be antedated by that of the eras preceding, though inferior; that of Petrarch by that of Dante and his forerunners and the influence of Arabia in Southern Europe;

and that of Molière by that of the Trouvères and Troubadours and Rabelais and Ronsard. Before we study Klopstock's "Messiah" and the new classical era that he inaugurated in Germany, the Minnesänger and Meistersänger must be examined. So, in England, we must go back of Elizabeth to Edward the Third, and back of Chaucer to the "Chronicle" and the Conquest, and back of the Anglo-Norman to the oldest English of Alfred and Cynewulf and Ælfric and Cædmon. This is particularly true of English poetry. Inasmuch as our prose did not take national form till the days of Hooker and Bacon, the principle of continuity as related to the pre-Elizabethan centuries is not, perchance, so conspicuous and real. In English verse, however, it is radically different, in that Chaucer stands at the opening of a national movement, and he himself embodies its spirit.

Whatever may be the relation of Hooker and Wyclif as prose writers, or of Raleigh and Fortescue, or of the sixteenth century in general and the fifteenth and fourteenth, the relation of Spenser to Chaucer, and of the Elizabethan poets to their predecessors, is historic and undoubted, and must be so regarded by every discerning student. There

is such a study as Literary Palæontology; a recurrence, by necessity, to first conditions, first forms and movements, not only by reason of their intrinsic importance, but because of their interpretative relation to conditions and tendencies that follow them and that are partly occasioned by them. There is in English letters, as in the Scriptures, an Old Testament as well as a New, to be together examined as mutually explanatory.

Such being the nexus, *a priori*, between the younger and the older England in the sphere of letters, it is worthy of remark that the fuller acknowledgment of such a relation is one of the most healthful signs of the times. So rapidly are long-existing prejudices disappearing in the light of new conditions, so surely has tradition given place to fact and educational demand in our modern institutions of learning, that there is no longer need of labored argument whereby to arouse the indifferent. "It can hardly be necessary to insist on the fact," writes Earle, "that our time is characterized by a desire for the restitution of vernacular English. Amidst all the diversities of literary English of this century, the one predominant and universal character is the growing appetite for the

original and native forms of the mother tongue." What Earle here applies with special emphasis to the English language is substantially applicable to English literature in its entirety. As the philosophers are calling us back to Kant, and the theologians calling us back to Paul, so are the wisest of our English critics calling us back to the olden time of Alfred and Chaucer and Caxton.

The subject of interest, therefore, which confronts us, is that of the general and specific forms in which such indebtedness of our later to our earlier literature has expressed and is expressing itself, as the history of the literature develops from age to age. As far as general indebtedness is concerned, there are three or four literary qualities directly traceable to this earlier influence which it would be well for our Modern English Letters to conserve with an ever-stricter fidelity.

1. The first of these is *literary vigor or spirit*, as opposed to all that is impotent, indifferent, and spiritless, — a strong and stalwart energy of soul, expressing itself in varied forms of efficiency, and proof against all attempts to stifle it. The most captious critics of our older authorship have never denied it this claim of literary vigor. Even if it be conceded that the literature of this earlier time

was in a sense unliterary or non-literary, somewhat crude in type and quite devoid of any marked artistic quality, it has been contended, with equal zeal, that what was lacking in artistic finish was fully supplied in mental force, and in the pronounced personality of the respective authors. Nor is it at all difficult to account for such a type of authorship. It comes by racial inheritance, by specific national tradition, through the medium of established historic sequence. It is of genuine Germanic origin, Gothic and Teutonic, as distinct from Latinic; a real North-European contribution to general letters, and to the English in particular, conspicuously contrasted with the South-European type, save in so far as such a type may be said to have entered somewhat to modify the old Gothic bluntness of manners. Hence the marked epic and dramatic quality of much of the older verse, as it appears in the graphic lines of "Beowulf," the great battle-epic of Old English; in "The Battle of Maldon" and "The Battle of Brunanburh," the two most famous Old English battle-lyrics; in "Elene," with its sacred story of Constantine and the Cross; in the recorded battles of the "Chronicle"; in the various legends of heroes and martyrs, such as Guthlac and Juliana and Judith and

Saint Andrew, who suffered and triumphed on behalf of right and truth and honor and chastity. In the later Middle English Period, the same undaunted spirit is manifest in Layamon's "Brut" and Robert of Gloucester's "Chronicle"; in the political tributes of Minot to English valor; in the trenchant satire of Chaucer and Langland against all tyranny and corruption in church and state; as in the verse and prose of Lydgate and Skelton and Wyclif and Latimer down to the days of Sir Thomas Wyatt, in his bold defense of the common people against the exactions of kings and courtiers, when monasteries hoary with age were dissolved in the interests of public liberty and social order, when free discussion took the place of bigotry, and the way was opened for the wide diffusion of liberty and learning. All this is in the line of specific literary vigor, an order of character and style fortunately illustrated at the very opening of our literary history, and thus setting the form for all that was to follow. Thus it is in no sense surprising that when the authors of our first modern era, in the days of Elizabeth, addressed themselves to their literary work, they did it with the open page of this earlier history before them, and felt it incumbent upon them to preserve the his-

toric reputation of the nation's authorship for mental and literary strength. After the Golden Age down to the Victorian Era, so faithful has been this adherence to the best traditions of the past, that the era of the Stuart Restoration may be said to be the only one that has marked a forgetfulness of it, while even then the voice of protest was often heard and heeded. What has rightly been called the "Old English directness of statement," saying what is meant with monosyllabic brevity, is but one of the many phases of this inherent terseness of statement, a real historic counterpart of the laconic language of Sparta.

2. The second literary quality which bears the evident marks of its early origin, and furnishes to Modern English Literature a valid element of indebtedness, is *naturalness*, — an order of utterance singularly notable for its unstudied character, its independence of schools and models, of established rules and methods. We may call it spontaneity, the free outspokenness of men and authors who felt that they were free to think and speak for themselves, and who further felt that the obligation was upon them to set the form of free expression for all the generations that were to follow. The Great Charter of political freedom which the

barons wrested from King John in the opening years of the thirteenth century was fully paralleled by the manner in which our older authors insisted, in the face of all opposition, that their thoughts were their own, for which they alone were responsible, and that to modify or suppress them was to run counter to their best instincts and interests, and to be untrue to their lineage as English. "Be that thou art" was the accepted motto of the time; no less, no more, none other. Here again, as in the expression of literary vigor, it often happened that a high degree of æsthetic finish was sacrificed to the artless utterances of nature, nor did the literature in the end sustain any permanent loss thereby. Of all the pre-Elizabethan authors who embodied in their spirit and work this invaluable quality of naturalness, it was Alfred and Chaucer, the respective representatives of tenth-century prose and fourteenth-century verse, who most thoroughly expressed it, and left an impression upon the literature of the time which nothing finite can efface. Speaking after the manner of the jurist at the bar, we might rest the case of the obligations of later to earlier English at this particular point with Alfred and Chaucer, who were nothing if not natural, asking no questions, founding no school,

taking counsel of themselves and the most urgent demands of the time, eager to reveal the truth that nature precedes art, that in literature there must be freedom, and the impulses of the heart be allowed to assert themselves. The Old English word "freshness" well expresses this tonic quality in these authors, as we speak of the freshness of an October morning, the out-of-door life of the woods and streams as contrasted with the seclusion of the cloister and library. There is thus a sense in which it is true that every literary age since then, in so far as it has been natural, has been somewhat indebted to them for its original impulse, as all eras devoid of this feature have marked a departure from older standards. It was so in the free expression of Elizabethan letters, especially in poetry; in the spontaneity of Milton's prose and verse; in the natural lines of Goldsmith and Burns and Moore. What is known as the Romantic Revival was but a reproduction in the modern era of this genuine Chaucerian spirit, the clear recall of the nation to its best poetic past, if so be it was to keep even pace with other nations in the development of letters. Even now, as contemporary English literature is unfolding, we are reminded, once and again, that we cannot forget, if we

would, that Alfred's prose and Chaucer's verse have had no superior as specimens of natural English.

3. An additional feature of indebtedness is seen in the uniform *sobriety* of the older writers; induced, partly, by what Taine would call the "natural temperament" of the English race; partly, by the peculiar and often adverse conditions under which our earlier literature was developed; partly, it would seem, by the close relation of the older authorship to the ecclesiastical life of the time; and somewhat, also, by an evident purpose on the part of these authors to embody all literature in ethical form, both for the well-being, as they thought, of literature itself, and that of the general public. It was, indeed, this spirit of personal and literary seriousness that the Angles and Saxons found in the fifth century so impressively illustrated in the original Celtic population of Britain, when Britain was full of native Celtic teachers, and missionaries from the Continent entered to extend the evangelistic work. This feature first appears in our earliest English epic, the "Paraphrase" of Cædmon, which, as scriptural in its basis and content, naturally is characterized throughout by a specific sedateness of manner. It

appears in the successive translations and versions of the Bible into the vernacular, if so be our oldest prose and verse might, at the very beginning, be rightly impressed and directed. Thus Bede prepared the Gospels; Aldhelm and Alfred, the Psalms; Ælfric, the Pentateuch; and Wyclif and Tyndale, the Bible as a whole. Thus Bede wrote his "Ecclesiastical History of Britain," and Alfred his version of Boethius' "Consolation of Philosophy." So Cynewulf wrote his "Andreas" and "Elene" and "Christ," a notable trilogy of sacred song. Even in "Beowulf," the great pagan, secular epic of the time, there is seen this pervasive gravity of tone and purpose in its portraiture of the severe Northern life of the Scandinavian peoples as related to the English. So Layamon and Orm and their contemporaries wrote sacred and secular treatises on behalf of truth and purity. When Sir John Mandeville wrote of his travels in the East, it was in this distinctively serious manner, while Caxton, the first English printer, and Hugh Latimer, the great Plantagenet reformer and preacher, wrote and taught for the same great end. The church and the school were practically one institution. Even the church and the stage were inseparably connected. The current sayings

and proverbs of the time were begotten of the more serious moods of the common mind. What such satirists as Lydgate, Skelton, Gascoigne, and Langland wrote they wrote with the soberest intent; so that it is not too much to say that the current distinction between the secular and the sacred was well-nigh effaced in this older era. In fine, look where we will in the prose and verse, the student is impressed by the fact that he is reading an order of authors who thought, first of all, of the moral effect of their writings, and but secondarily of their specific literary value.

Nor should it be forgotten that, as a whole, the literature, though serious, was not serious to a fault, dwelling by preference on the more forbidding phases of human life, and making a virtue of despondency. Despite the allegations of Taine and other higher critics, the dominant tone is sedate without being somber; manly without being morose; and designed above all to impress upon the reader the necessity and duty of looking upon life from a rational point of view. One will search in vain among these older poets for such a character as Byron, or such a poem as "Don Juan," or "Queen Mab," or "Chastelard." The temper of the time, the character of the authors,

and their literary conscience made such an order of verse impossible. The older literature had its errors and defects, in the form of limitation of outlook, partial development, lack of æsthetic taste, and undue conservatism, but not in the line of the unwholesome or of questionable motive and spirit.

Such are the three specific qualities received by inheritance from our earlier literature — Vigor, Naturalness, and Sobriety, nor can they be too sedulously cherished as our literary history develops; first of all, a trenchant order of style, where the writer fearlessly reveals his mind and in language unmistakably clear; next to this, an unstudied and self-expressing freedom of utterance, independent of all formalism or restrictive literary statute; and, last of all, a well-ordered gravity of diction and spirit, whereby literature may be safely guarded against excess, and developed on behalf of truth and the highest human interests. In a word, vitality and sanity make up the legacy received, a healthful and normal order of expression, which, with all its faults and limitations, has never been charged with indifference or a disregard of what is most beneficent to a people's life and letters.

It is in place to note with emphasis the fact that these are the three special qualities that are somewhat in jeopardy as modern literary tendencies reveal themselves. In so far as these tendencies are at present capable of interpretation, they may be said to lie in the line of literary impotency; undue attention to technique, and an increasing representation of human life on its cheerless and hopeless side. Such a lack of masculine virility is especially noticeable in modern fiction, undue attention to verbal structure being prominent in verse; while, in prose fiction and poetry alike, the utterances of the pessimist find too frequent expression. In this last class of authors are such notable names as Matthew Arnold and Clough. Tennyson himself has often erred on the side of verbal mechanism, while the large majority of miscellaneous prose writers and poets add nothing, when they write, to the substantive intellectual product of the time. These are tendencies only, but none the less perilous, and are to be carefully noted and corrected by all who are interested in the progress of English letters. Signs of protest are already at hand. Here and there, earnest voices are raised, recalling the nation to its earlier history. The late Poet Laureate, whatever his defects, zealously worked

along this higher line. The poetry of Watson and Noyes is attracting deserved attention, especially by reason of the natural impulse that inspires it, the old Chaucerian life and spirit; while not a few of those who class themselves of the school of Tennyson, Browning, and Swinburne are not afraid to rebuke the verbal mechanism, obscurity, and sensuousness of these respective authors. As nations increase in wealth and power, and social conditions become more complex, and life departs more and more widely from primitive ideals; so a nation's literature assumes the same abnormal features, and becomes less and less distinctive.

SUGGESTIONS

From this discussion some inferences of value follow.

1. We notice, that, in so far as English letters are concerned, the study of the earlier literature necessarily involves the study of the language, in a sense not actual or possible in modern eras. English literature and English philology are not only more intimately connected in the pre-Elizabethan period than in any subsequent era, but they are practically and historically one and the same study. Inasmuch as the prose of

Alfred and the verse of Cædmon and Cynewulf must be approached and interpreted through grammar and glossary and Old English text, the student of this oldest literature finds himself, perforce, a student of English on its linguistic side, emphasizing the language first and the literature afterward. Even after the Norman Conquest, and the close of the "Chronicle," in the latter part of the twelfth century, as the student finds himself among the products of fourteenth-century English, down to the days of Caxton and Wyatt, there is a sense in which the study of English philology is the necessary prerequisite to the study of English literature; the text of "The Canterbury Tales" and "Piers the Plowman" affording a convenient manual for the specifically linguistic examination of fourteenth-century English. So prominent, indeed, and essential, is this philological feature, that, here and there, critics of literature have started the question as to the possibility of assigning the beginning of English literature proper to a period prior to the reign of Henry the Seventh. Such a question is a plausible and natural one, and yet a superficial one, proving entirely too much in its application to other literatures. It loses sight of the fact that literature, in its evident

province, embraces every product of authorship, prose, and verse, earlier and later, quite irrespective of the special stage of the development of the language at the publication of any particular work. Certainly, Greek literature is not confined to modern or spoken Greek, but is mainly treasured up in what may be called the strictly philological form of the authorship, when lexicon and commentary and grammar must be studied in order to reach the literature. This is eminently true of all dead languages, the literature of which, because they are unspoken, is only to be found by linguistic examination. Even in the tongues of Modern Continental Europe, as the German and French, the same principle is approximately true. Old and Middle High German are subjects of philological investigation in a sense not true of Modern German, and yet no one would be so narrow as to affirm that German literature as such does not begin till the days of Luther. The same may be said of Old French as distinct from Modern French; the former being a more distinctively philological study, and yet having a literature of its own, vitally related to all that follows it. So with our vernacular as a language and literature in its older eras, it being reserved for the modern

era of Shakespeare, Milton, and Addison to assign the linguistic and the literary to their respective spheres. Herein lie the unity and diversity of English philology and letters, and without any violation of historical fact or logical principle.

2. A second suggestion of interest may be in this form: Post-Elizabethan Authors, Periods, and Literary Movements may be tested and classified in the light of this historic indebtedness, as to whether or not they have acknowledged it at all, and, if acknowledging it, to what degree and with what measure of enthusiasm. In the Age of Elizabeth as the golden age of the English drama and English literature in general, and the first era of Modern English Letters, and thus chronologically nearer to the older epoch, it is natural to find a free and full appreciation of such a relation of interdependence, so that Spenser aimed to reinstate the influence of Chaucer; and Shakespeare himself, with all his genius, made constant reference to the earlier chroniclers, as affording him the necessary data for his dramatic work. The relation of the Elizabethan drama, historically viewed, to the Old English drama, is patent to every English scholar; the nexus being so vital and pronounced that Lowell ignores all

distinctions of time, and discusses the writings of Ford, Chapman, Marlowe, and Massinger under the common caption of Old English Dramatists. In the reign of the Stuarts this bond of relationship is less conspicuous, though existent; the influence of Milton, especially in his poetry, being strongly conservative in this direction. Such less notable authors as Herbert, Wither, Fuller, and Walton, both in the letter and spirit of their writings, did much to perpetuate this historico-literary movement. The influence of France in the middle years of the Stuart Dynasty was far too dominant to allow the old Alfredian and Chaucerian spirit to have its legitimate sway, while even such standard authors as Dryden and Pope may be said to have done little or nothing in the line of such acknowledgment, Dryden's attempted modernization of Chaucer totally failing of any beneficent result. It was not till the rise of the Romantic Era, and the beginning of what Mr. Courthope has called The Liberal Movement in English Letters, that this acknowledgment of the older authorship was again distinctive and appreciated and the way widely opened for what was best in Elizabethan letters. Thomson, Cowper, Burns, Wordsworth, Goldsmith, and Byron

breathed this fresher air, and awakened anew the dormant energies of the England of their day; while down through the reign of the successive Georges, and well on to the time of Tennyson, the spirit of the literature may be said to have expressed a happy combination of the old and the new, the traditional and the progressive. Tennyson did an invaluable work in calling his countrymen to an appreciative survey of the literary England that lay far behind them in the days of Malory and the old Celtic legends of Arthur and his Knights. Mr. Brooke, after stating "that the Norman Conquest put to the sword what was left in Wessex of English literature," hastens to add, "Though sorely wounded, English literature was not slain. It retired from the world in country villages, in secluded monasteries, slowly gathering strength, assimilating fresh influences until Norman and English were woven politically into one people." It is these "fresh influences" that found their way by natural process down through the Middle English Period to the day of Wordsworth and our own American Whittier, and bid fair to be a permanent feature of every future era. The Old and the New English are in a sense contemporary.

In fine, there is such a principle as Relativity in Literature, such a spirit as the Historico-Literary Spirit,—a deference to the past because it is past, and because, as such, it holds the beginnings of all later movements. King Alfred has been dead a thousand years, and Chaucer five hundred, and, yet, they are as much alive to-day in all English-speaking countries as if they were walking along our streets and conversing with us; so clear is the literary debt of the twentieth century to the tenth and the fourteenth.

II

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH PROSE

As a matter of history, prose is of later origin than verse, both in English and general literature. This refers, however, to standard prose as compared with standard verse, it being true that the initial and immature forms of prose are nearly, if not quite, as early as those of poetry. This is signally true in English literature. It may further be stated that there is a principle of development in literature, historical and logical, at times concealed, and at times revealed; a development demanding time for its expression and indicating orderly succession and gradation. It is, in fine, the principle of evolution in literature applied to the special province of prose. It is this that Earle speaks of the first, second, and third "culminations" of our vernacular prose, as reached respectively, in the tenth, fifteenth, and nineteenth centuries. By this it is meant that our English prose must be studied in its regular, historical unfoldings, and, especially, in those standard periods.

or "culminations," when the literary life of the nation came to its fullest expression. Viewing our prose, therefore, as a growth, and emphasizing the term "historical," as applied to it, we may reach our result the soonest by following, chronologically, the course of the centuries, from the days of Alfred to those of Victoria and Edward the Seventh.

The first period is that of Old English, dating from the first invasion of Germanic tribes, in 447 A.D., to the Norman Conquest of 1066, an initial and experimental period, more vital than national, in every sense preparative and tentative. Old English prose did indeed exist centuries prior to the Conquest, but strictly as an Old English type, expressed in a text and under grammatical forms practically unknown to the Modern English student. Earle and others insist, at one extreme, that English prose dates from the fifth century. "It will, I fear," he writes, "sound strange if I assert that we possess a longer pedigree of prose literature than any other nation in Europe, and that if we seek to trace it up to its starting point we are not brought to a stand until we have mounted up to the very earliest times, past the threshold of English Christianity out into the

heathen times beyond, and are close up to the first struggle of the invasion," close up, he would say, to the entrance of the Jutes, in the middle of the fifth century. At the other extreme, Matthew Arnold insists that our prose dates its first actual appearance in the seventeenth century, though he concedes that this later prose is a "re-appearance" of what had existed far back of the days of Chaucer. Each of these critics is in error,—Arnold, in deferring the rise of our modern prose to the time of Cowley and Milton; and Earle, in recording its appearance as standard as far back as what he calls "the obscure though well-evidenced remains" of the fifth and sixth centuries. It is especially in the eighth century, he argues, that the valid beginnings of English prose are seen,— "a time," he says, "in which we can produce a sustained and continuous narrative in prose" and "displayed with something like literary competency." This is a conclusion that must be accepted conditionally; this prose of these earlier centuries being such only as Old English, to be interpreted through grammar and glossary and by way of independent study, which down to the time of Chaucer is a study as much linguistic as literary. The very examples adduced by Earle

to prove his position are a sufficient refutation. They are taken from deeds and legal documents, from the annals of "The Chronicles," "the syntax of which," he adds, "is not more rugged than that of Thucydides." Of the prose of the ninth century, the Age of Alfred, though "full of strength and dignity," and "capable of the attribution of style," the statement must be accepted with a condition that we are using the word "style" in a strictly relative sense; as we must, also, interpret Harrison's phrase relatively when he calls Alfred the "Founder of English Prose." Even in the tenth century, which Earle calls the "First Culmination," the extracts are taken from land charters and from the Bible Versions of the time; in the eleventh, from the Homilies of Wulfstan and the Chronicle of Worcester; in the twelfth, from the Peterborough Chronicle, and in the thirteenth from a monastic production entitled "The Wooing of Our Lord." From these selected specimens, the Bible Versions apart, it will be seen, that, though they bring us down to the fourteenth century and the birth of Chaucer, they are strictly Old English Prose Specimens, and should be classified as such.

It is not, indeed, till the close of the fifteenth

century and the opening of the sixteenth, that we come to the era of Modern English Prose, after the introduction of printing into England, in 1477, and the consequent revival of literature and learning. The prose of Chaucer, Mandeville, and Wyclif appears in this transitional, Middle English Era, but it is not till we come to the prose of Malory and Fortescue and the Paston Letters, and to that of Caxton, Latimer, and Ascham and to the Bible of Tyndale, in the days of Henry the Eighth, that we clearly discern the dawning of a modern era, the Golden Age of Hooker and Bacon, of Raleigh and Sidney, the Age of Elizabeth and James. What Earle has called the "Second Culmination" of our prose, at the close of the fifteenth century, is, indeed, its real beginning, when it may be said first to have come to itself and apprehended its literary mission, and first became a true exponent of the people as distinct from scholars and the privileged orders of the kingdom.

Hence it is that Saintsbury, in his "Specimens of English Prose Style," begins, aright, with the name of Malory, whose transfer of the Arthurian Legends from poetry into prose, in 1485, did much to establish English prose as national. "We

begin these specimens," says the editor, "with the invention of printing; not of course denying the title of books written before Caxton set up his press to the title of English or of English prose. In the earlier examples, however, the character of the passages . . . is scarcely characteristic. . . . The work of Malory, charming as it is, . . . is an adaptation of French originals"; and he concludes by saying, "It was not till the reign of Elizabeth was some way advanced that a definite effort on the part of writers to make our English prose style can be perceived." All this is true, and yet we are not to forget the fact that the leading English critics are at one in the opinion, that, from the standpoint of strict historical sequence, what we call Development, this extended pre-Elizabethan period must be taken into account and given its fullest emphasis. Too much stress cannot be laid upon the fact that Elizabethan prose, though the first modern form, is inseparably connected with the prose of Alfred and Wyclif; so that, apart from such connection, the later form could not have been what it was. The indebtedness is direct and indirect, general and special; the most valuable inheritance from the older forms being in that inner spirit of vigor

and independence that is so leading a characteristic of everything Teutonic. It is, indeed, this special point which such authors as Green and Freeman are always pressing, but modern students fail to note this historic connection, which becomes more and more marked as we approach the Golden Age.

By English Prose Proper, therefore, we mean Modern English Prose, beginning in pronounced form in the sixteenth century, induced, as it was, by the Revival of Learning and the opening of the Modern Era. The Essays of Bacon, as Hallam states it, "leads the van of our prose literature." For the first time, in the history of English literature, prose may be said to have become a serious rival of verse, claiming the suffrages of the people as well as those of the universities, insomuch that poetry needed such apologists as Sidney and Webbe to vindicate its claims and assure its continued status. In the time of Chaucer, it was so manifestly in abeyance, that his own poems seemed to compass the literary field; while it is due to Shakespeare and his fellow-dramatists that, in the Golden Age, poetry secured and maintained a commanding place, the concomitant growth of sound and vigorous prose marking the era as a

comprehensive one, and giving large promise of what the ages following might reasonably expect.

SIXTEENTH-CENTURY PROSE — ELIZABETHAN

Noting the limits of the Elizabethan Age as extending from the middle of the sixteenth century to the close of the reign of Charles the First (1550-1649), we have such prominent names as Bacon, Hooker, Raleigh, Sidney, Jonson, Moore, and others, representing what has been called the Early and the Later Elizabethan Prose. These writers, it is to be carefully noticed, simply opened the prose record, so that, with all their merits, as compared with the authors who preceded them, they also had those necessary imperfections that belong to an initial era. Careful students of these earlier efforts are more and more inclined to examine them in a spirit of literary charity, and, yet, in the interests of truth, they must rate them at their real worth. An examination of these limitations will be of service as proof in point of the Historical Development of English Prose. "The history of our earlier Elizabethan prose," writes Saintsbury, "if we except the name of Hooker, is, to a great extent, the history of tentative and imperfect efforts, scarcely resulting in any real,

vernacular style." He gives the explanation when he calls it the "Period of Origins." The critic might, with equal truthfulness, have included Hooker also, and the later Elizabethan prose, Bacon and Jonson excepted; while these authors themselves often put the impartial student at his wits' end to justify their rank as standard. They are standard only as related to the age of beginnings in which they lived, and not in the light of those fundamental laws of prose expression by which books and writers must finally be judged. This is especially true of Hooker, author of "The Ecclesiastical Polity." What English reader has been so brave as to read beyond the first or second book of the five, or possibly eight, books that make up the total of this controversial treatise? and this not by reason of its polemic and partisan character, but mainly by reason of its literary defects as a specimen of Modern English prose. In structure and diction it lies midway between English as inflected and uninflected, breaking away from the old grammatical forms of the fifteenth century and aiming to assume independent function. It is, out and out, an Anglo-Latinic treatise, so that the modern reader is obliged to note the presence, on every page, of words and constructions altogether

unallowable in the standard English of to-day. It is true, as Dean Church states it, that his writings "mark an epoch in the use of the English language," but this is only to say that he entered with enthusiasm into the new Elizabethan movement, and not that he escaped its errors. The same remark is true, though not so fully, of Bacon, who, in order to give a European status to his philosophical writings, and make his books, as he states it, "citizens of the world, which English books are not," circulated them in Latin, the universal language. In fact, the prose of the time was corrupted and, to that extent, un-English, a deliberate compromise, based on supposed necessity, between the scholastic language of the Middle Ages and the ever-increasing demands of the rising English. If to this we add the fact that Euphuism, the current literary vice of the time, more or less affected the prose, we see at once that we are dealing with an order of prose which, though beginning in the Golden Age, was, still, only a beginning, and must be so studied. In the days of Elizabeth, we look in vain for a model of English prose; Ben Jonson, in his "Discoveries," making the nearest approximation thereto. Still, the historical development was fully under

way. No such prose as that of Bacon, Hooker, and Jonson had, as yet, appeared, or could have appeared. That there were gross faults of vocabulary, syntax, and style may be charged to the time and conditions under which these authors lived, far more than to the authors themselves, who, even when writing in Latin or in Latinic phrase, were intensely English in spirit and in aim, and did what they could to establish the prose on an enduring basis.

SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PROSE (1650-1700)

Between the latter part of the reign of Charles the Second and the opening of the reign of Queen Anne, in 1702, we have the latter half of the seventeenth century, and the more important, lying, as it does, midway between the Elizabethan and the Augustan Era. Short as the period is, it marks a very suggestive stage in English Prose Development, in that it includes two widely different, and yet essential, expressions of that development, represented, respectively, in the person of Milton and of Dryden, whose death in 1700 marks the chronological as well as the literary close of the epoch. The first expression of this development is seen in the short period of the Commonwealth

(1649-60), in the rise and dominance of Puritan prose, as chiefly embodied in the vigorous pages of Milton, and also manifested, in more or less impressive form, in Jeremy Taylor, the divine; in Thomas Hobbes, the philosopher; in Sir Thomas Browne, the antiquarian; and in Izaak Walton, the cheerful and contemplative author of "The Complete Angler." Puritan prose, as the Puritan character, has received its due share of censure at the hands of English and foreign critics, and is coming, more and more, to its due share of praise; the frequent expressions of each of these phases of criticism making it incumbent on every student of English to examine the record for himself and reach his own conclusions. This much, however, must be conceded, and this is all that is necessary for our present purpose, — that the prose of Milton and his contemporaries marks an important stage in English Prose Development, and reveals a new phase of the English mind as expressed in literature. There is an order of prose which, for need of a better term, we call "Forensic," a kind of political prose, by which great civic questions are discussed with civic vigor, and authors assume a more pronounced and fearless attitude than at other times and with other aims in view. It was

thus with Milton and Hobbes, and even with Browne and Bunyan, in their trenchant, virile way of stating truth. The incisive diction of "The Holy War" is Puritan prose at its best, and in forensic form, only within the sphere of the distinctively religious. The author of "The Complete Angler" was the only one of these writers who wrote in a more subdued manner.

The second of these expressions is found in the prose of the Restoration and the English Revolution, as these great historic movements stand related, politically and logically, in which literary movement John Dryden stands out as the most conspicuous figure. Such other names as Tillotson, South, and Barrow, in Divinity; Cudworth and Locke, in Philosophy; Burnet, in Ecclesiastical History; Sidney, in Political History; Collier, in Dramatic Criticism; and Temple, in Miscellany, added luster to the era. The fact that Bunyan wrote his spiritual treatises amid the excesses of the Restoration is as anomalous to the student as that Milton penned his epics on God and man in the same unfriendly period. It is at this epoch that Gallic influence came in upon English prose and verse with unwonted force, though not altogether with harmful result. "The Restoration,"

says Saintsbury, "introduced the study and comparison of a language which, though still alien from English, was far less removed from it than the other Romance tongues." Even to the degree in which French was working injury, such an evil influence was less and less observable as the history developed on toward the time of William of Orange and the Great Rebellion, in that the Rebellion freed English society, the English church and state and literature and speech, from the dominance of the Romanism and the Gallicism of the Stuart Dynasty.

Of the epochal and beneficent work of Dryden in this gradational movement of English prose toward a better type, scarcely too much can be said. It was under Dryden's influence that prose in general, and prose criticism in special, in the seventeenth century, rose to their maximum. He was the Doctor Johnson of his era, the Bacon and Hooker of his age. "At no time that I can think of," writes an English critic, "was there any Englishman who, for a considerable period, was so far in advance of his contemporaries in almost every branch of literary work as Dryden was in the last twenty years of the seventeenth century. The eighteen volumes of his works contain a

faithful representation of the whole literary movement in England for the best part of half a century, and indicate the direction of almost the whole literary movement for nearly a century more." This strong language, applied to Dryden's entire work in prose and verse, is especially applicable to his prose; his specific impress upon literature being best understood when we reflect what English prose would have been at the close of the era had not Dryden appeared. We are not now dealing with the special department of English Prose Criticism, but the name of Dryden suggests the fact that his best prose work lay in this direction, and that his merit therein is so pronounced that the appellation given him, at times, the "Father of Modern English Criticism," is not undeserved. In his "Critical Prefaces," we have the first extant specimens of genuine literary criticism in the sphere of prose, while his celebrated "Essay on Dramatic Poesy" evinced the fact that he was fully qualified to apply these principles to verse and within the special province of the drama.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PROSE

The death of Dryden, in 1700, and the opening

of the eighteenth century mark another era in the historico-literary sequence we are studying. Now, for the first time, it may be said with critical exactness that we have come to a period of fully perfected English prose, when it assumed a form and quality from which there has been no material deviation, and which justly entitles it to the name of standard prose. It has been justly called in this respect "the schoolmaster of all periods to follow," settling, once for all, what our prose was, and indicating as well to what it might attain in the centuries following. This is not to say that, in the prose of the Augustan and the Early Georgian Age, there were not serious defects and infringements of literary law, but that these had now been reduced to a minimum; that the vernacular English was more and more fully asserting itself, and that, when the century closed, in the reign of George III., English prose could be favorably compared with that of any Continental tongue.

Some of the *special phases* of this period may be noted. First of all, it is evident that Augustan and Early Georgian literature is especially a prose type; differing, in this respect, from that of the Age of Elizabeth, and more in keeping with that

of the antecedent reign of the Stuarts; thus preparing the way, moreover, for that copious expression of prose marking the subsequent era.

A further feature is seen in the ever-increasing emphasis of the Vernacular over all competing influences, classical and Continental. In so far as this classical influence was concerned, it was as fully embodied in the prose of Johnson, in the so-called Johnsonese of the time, as in any other one writer. Yet, no careful observer of the trend of modern literary judgment can fail to note that the Latinic element in Johnsonian English is not as pronounced as has been asserted, and that, even when present, is not so injurious in its effect as prejudiced opinion has made it to be; less so, indeed, than in the pages of Bacon and Hooker. No less an authority than Johnson's loyal biographer, Hill, has come to his defense at this very issue. Conceding, to some extent, his alleged "pomp of diction," he justifies it, in part, on the ground, that with the author of "The Rambler" at the time, and with his special ends in view, he could conscientiously have adopted no other type, in that he came before the age and the world as "a majestic teacher of moral and religious wisdom." "To a writer who is full of the greatness of such

a vocation," says Hill, "as Johnson undoubtedly was, a certain stateliness of language is natural, and, if well conducted, tends to win the confidence and interest of the reader."

The Continental influence was Gallic, as embodied chiefly in the writings of Gibbon, the historian, who had as much occasion for his Gallicisms as Johnson for his Latinisms, in that he was an accomplished French scholar; published his first book in French, and lived for years under a French environment, at Lausanne. Despite all this, however, it is of Gibbon that Saintsbury writes, "We shall never have a greater historian in style as well as in matter." Be this as it may, suffice it to state, that, in the face of all Latinic and Gallic influence, English prose gradually worked its way along from point to point away from classical and Continental traditions, away from Euphuism and other false ideals, toward a form and function fundamentally English and modern.

An additional feature of this prose is seen in the fact that it marked the substantial beginning of no less than three representative types of prose, — a feature enough in itself to prove the fact of

historical evolution, and enough, as well, to establish the literary repute of the age.

It is in this era that Journalistic English may be said to have taken historic form in the writings of Defoe. It is of the journalists L'Estrange and Defoe that a modern critic is speaking, as he calls them "the flag-bearers" of the new movement toward a more popular every-day English, as expressed in the pamphlets and brief periodicals of the day. Though to L'Estrange, as the earlier writer, belongs the praise of being "the first representative name in the annals of journalism," the work and influence of Defoe was so much more vital and effective, that the real beginning of journalistic English may be said to be found in him. Journalistic prose had its errors then, as it has them now,—errors of diction, structure, and general style, often due to superficial thinking, inordinate haste of preparation, and the imperative demands of the waiting press,—but the faults were less prominent than the benefits; so that it must be conceded that Modern Popular English owes an invaluable debt to the author of "Robinson Crusoe." In fact, the great development of the time in the English Essay under Addison and Steele was but another name

for Journalistic English, the famous Letters of Junius by Sir Philip Francis being still another expression of the tendency of the time to break away from all forms of classicism, and express its thought in the homely language of the common folk. *The Tatler* and *The Idler*, and even the political pamphlets of the era, such as *The Guardian* and *The Freeholder*, were newspaper English in the form of descriptive miscellany, the real beginnings in English prose of the modern periodical and editorial. The current phrase "a Spectator paper" is itself a confirmation of this union of literature proper and journalism. A hasty comparison of one of these weeklies or dailies with an essay of Bacon carefully elaborated will confirm the popular character of the former. Essays had existed before Queen Anne. The journalistic essay had no antecedent history. It was a product of the period. So as to the English Novel in its historic relation to other forms of English prose, dating its real beginning in the days of Defoe and Fielding, even though, as in the case of the Essay, a kind of fiction existed as far back as the days of Sidney and Malory. For the first time, however, the English novel gained and held historic place as a permanent form of Eng-

lish prose which Sterne, Walpole, and Goldsmith developed in ever-multiplied forms.

These were the prose forms whose beginnings date from the period in question, while all other prose forms already established were enriched and strengthened by the writers of the time, — Theology, by Butler and Warburton; Philosophy, by Hartley, Reid, and Berkeley; Political Science, by Smith and Bentham; and Literary Criticism, by Burke and Alison. In fine, English Prose, if we may so express it, was on its feet and full of age, having passed its novitiate into its majority, brooking no rival and ever aspiring toward better things. It is not strange, therefore, that when we cross the threshold and pass over into the following century, at the close of the Georgian Era, we pass from prose to prose and to ever-higher expressions of it as the opening years of the twentieth century are at hand.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY PROSE

Of nineteenth-century English prose, it is sufficient to say, that it records the high-water mark of our prose development, fairly contests the ground for supremacy with the development of English poetry, and reveals an order and a meas-

ure of excellence of which every English-speaking student may be justly proud.

Here and there, as the new century advances, it may change its phases to suit the prevailing temper of the time, and in order to be strictly representative, progressive enough to break away in part from all antecedent conditions, and, yet, conservative enough to be true to all those fundamental principles of prose expression which belong to every age and every standard author.

What a list of worthies it is as we cite it! In Historic Prose, Grote, Hallam, Mill, Buckle, Alison, Green, and Froude; in Fiction, Thackeray, Reade, Bulwer, Dickens, Disraeli, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot; in Philosophic Prose, Whately, Chillingworth, Bentley and Cudworth; in Forensic Prose, Burke and Pitt and O'Connor; and in Miscellany, Sydney Smith, Landor, Thomas Arnold and Matthew Arnold, Christopher North and the Edinburgh Reviewers, until we wonder where we can find the dividing-line between the first and second orders — what there is in English heredity and environment to beget so splendid a breed of authors in prose, for a parallel of which we look in vain in any modern European literature.

Such is the principle of development applied to

prose literature. Hence, a vital question emerges, whether Contemporary English Prose is maintaining its historic place; in answer to which we may say, that the expansion is still visible. In History, we have Freeman and McCarthy and Lecky; in Fiction, Macdonald and James and Mrs. Ward; in Miscellany, Mahaffy and Minto and Morley and Dowden and Saintsbury and an ever-widening list. Especially in historical and literary criticism, there is a generation of authors rising to mastery, as yet in the prime of their middle manhood, and producing an order of prose favorably comparing with the best products of the past. Despite all imperfections, English Prose has never been in safer hands than it is at present, nor is there anything like it on the Continent of Europe. Clearer than the German, and more vigorous than the French, and far more copious than either, it is clearly within the limits of truth to say, that no more fitting medium has as yet been found for the expression of thought and taste.

III

THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LYRIC VERSE

BEFORE taking up the special study of the Lyric as expressed in English verse, it will conduce to clearness to note very briefly the Origin and General Characteristics of Lyric Verse, and the various forms which it has assumed in our literary history.

Lyric Verse, as the name implies, was verse originally sung to the lyre, when bards and minstrels sang and played the songs which they had composed. The oldest type of standard verse, as, also, the most natural, spontaneous, and simple, it claims, in this respect, a kind of priority over all competing forms. Though not especially illustrating some of the qualities of the epic, such as moral sublimity and vastness of outlook, nor some of the qualities of the dramatic, such as tragic intensity and general scenic effect, it possesses features of a high order peculiarly its own, and it embraces an area of literary and emotional movement not so fully covered by any other poetical forms.

ORIGIN OF LYRIC VERSE

Its origin may be said to lie within the human heart itself, its common and special experiences, its expressible and inexpressible emotional life, so that it would not be aside from the truth to define Lyric Verse, as the Metrical Expression of Human Feeling, the Metrical Expression of Thought through the Emotions as a Medium.

SOME OF ITS CHARACTERISTICS

1. It is an eminently *subjective* type of verse, as distinct from epic and dramatic, expressing the innermost sensibilities of the poet himself. Instead of following the plan of the epist as a narrator of events, or that of the dramatist in representing the thoughts and experiences of others, the lyric records the ever-changing life of the lyrist himself as a man, both in his individual character and in his relation to the nation or the race.

The lyric is the interpreter of the world within, its desires and hopes and fears and loves and hates. Lyric verse is thus essentially realistic, as the drama from its imitative character cannot be, and the epic from its historic and descriptive character cannot be, — a form of verse in which the

author can never act by deputy, but only in the way of a heart-to-heart interview, immediate and personal. Hence, its unwonted vitality and currency; so that what is popularly called literature and life, nowhere finds a more fitting example. It is literature in living forms.

2. The lyric may be said to exhibit the *possible and actual union of the subjective and objective*, so that emotion shall never become an end in itself, but terminate, at length, on some external and worthy object, which object, indeed, has furnished the occasion for its expression. Thus it is in the lyrics of friendship and patriotism and religion, — in those Lyrics of the Hearthside, as Dunbar calls them, — where the outward object elicits the inward feeling, and determines the measure and character of its utterance. No sentiment that begins and ends in itself can be real and normal, its healthy character always being confirmed by the fact that it always seeks and finds an object external to itself.

3. The *comprehensiveness* of the lyric is another of its notable features, wider in its range than the epic or dramatic, and expressing in one or another of its forms every experience possible to man, and reaching out, at length, beyond the

finite and human into the region of the infinite. That lyric cry of which the poets speak comes from the deepest depths, and reaches to the highest heights. It is this breadth of area that is one of the most engaging elements of lyrical study, ever inviting the student to new investigations and ever rewarding him with wider vision.

4. As an additional feature, it may be noted, that the *structure* of the lyric, the sonnet apart, is without limitation, while as to the sonnet itself, though the number of the lines cannot vary, the variety of the rhyme, as in Milton, Shakespeare, and Byron, may be such as to allow the poet the fullest individual freedom.

THE FORMS OF THE LYRIC

In the light of what we have found to be true as to the scope of the lyric, it would be just to say, that the external poetic form which the lyric may assume may be as varied as human feeling itself, there being no emotion known to the human heart which could not embody itself, and has not embodied itself, in some idyllic structure. More specifically, however, convenient classifications may be adopted, as emphasizing this or that particular feature. Hence, we have Sacred

and Secular Lyrics,—the Sacred including the Scriptural or Biblical, the Religious and the Moral, as illustrated, respectively, in Hebrew verse, in the hymns of the church, and in such ethical poems as Spenser's "Heavenly Love" and "Heavenly Beauty." Under the Secular, would fall all other species,—the Pastoral, as Spenser's "Shepherd's Calendar"; the Elegiac, as Arnold's "Thyrsis"; the Humorous, as Burns's "Jolly Beggars"; the National, as the Patriotic Sonnets of Milton; the Amatory, as the Love Songs of Moore; the Descriptive, as Shelley's "Ode to the Skylark"; the Convivial, as the songs of Burns, and all those specimens that come under the caption of Ballads, as found in Thackeray and Tennyson, in many of which the border-line between the epic and the lyric is almost too dim for discernment, so that the phrase "an epic lyric" or "a lyrical epic" is not without justification. In "Comus," we have a dramatic lyric. Further still, if necessary, all lyrics might be reduced to the class of Odes, the fact that they were originally set to music and sung to the lyre not being so strictly applicable in the freer classification of later criticism.

There is a twofold division of the lyric, how-

ever, which is inclusive of all existing forms and a practical division for the student of verse.

These are Demonstrative and Reflective lyrics, the feeling in the first being expressed in pronounced and positive form, and, in the second, in a subdued and modified form. Hence, all National and Humorous lyrics would be of the demonstrative type, as the Elegiac and Pastoral would be of the reflective type, some of the most notable lyrics being marked by the practical union and fusion of the two forms.

The second of these forms, the Reflective Lyric, is now especially prominent in literary criticism, — just what it is, and what its province, and just to what degree a song or an ode may be reflective and yet preserve its genuine emotional character. Suffice it to say, that the only condition is that the feeling shall always control the thought, that the poem shall never pass over to the domain of the didactic. Thus interpreted, these contemplative lyrics are found to constitute an important part of modern idyllic verse; genuine emotion, in its depth and tenderness, being so often beyond a full expression. The expression, at the most, must be subdued, restrained, and temperate.

THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LYRIC

This we are now prepared to study intelligently. At the outset, we mark the suggestive fact that this development has been mainly in keeping with the general development of English poetry and, in fact, with that of English letters. Hence, in the first expressions of our poetic and literary life, we find what we might expect to find, the simplest forms of lyric expression in ode and song, and no such elaborate examples as later Georgian or Victorian days reveal. To look for Wordsworth's great ode or Tennyson's great elegy before the days of Milton would be out of keeping with all historico-literary conditions.

In tracing thus the history of English Lyric, we may inquire, first of all, as to its pre-Elizabethan expression in its twofold period of Old and Middle English. Inasmuch as the lyric is the oldest and most natural expression of a nation's literary life, we might rightfully expect to find some substantive examples of it in these earlier eras, even though embodied in the cruder forms consonant to a primitive age. This expectation is in part realized, and would have been much more fully so had not the political conditions of the people and their bitter struggle for a national life been

so intense as often to make impossible any form of literary work.

Thus we have the Hymns and Metrical Homilies of the Old English period, its Odes and Sonnets, so often expressed on the reflective side, as occasioned by the strenuous life of the age. Hence, we have such examples as "The Lament of Deor" and "The Traveller's Song," "The Metres of Boethius," "The Death of Byrthnoth," "The Battle of Brunanburh," and the various legends of saints and heroes, in which the epic and the lyric about equally divide the poetry, there being in all the verse a note of seriousness so distinct and prolonged as to set its seal upon the literature at large.

After the Conquest, in the Middle English Era, the lyric assumes a freer form, as, here and there, it betokens the coming of a better day. Here we find the martial songs of Minot, and Occleve's "Lament for Chaucer," and numerous odes and ballads from anonymous authors, symbolic of a distinct idyllic movement presaging the Revival of Learning. Here the name of Chaucer is prominent. Just in what sense Chaucer may be called a lyric poet is still a debatable question; the broader term "descriptive" being generally applied as the best

adapted to the special characteristics of his verse. An epic poet certainly he is not, nor in any valid sense dramatic, save, as in "The Canterbury Tales," we note a collection of characters portrayed with something like scenic effect.

Hence, the verse is either descriptive or lyric; the drift of criticism being in the direction of giving Chaucer credit for a measure of lyric skill hitherto denied to him, or, at least, combining the two types of verse, the lyric and the descriptive, so as not unduly to emphasize either form. In "The Canterbury Tales," we note a distinctive lyric element, on the basis of which the criticism has been ventured that Chaucer may be called "our first English lyricist." It is in his shorter poems, however, that the claims to this distinction must be found; their very brevity conducing to lyric form, and offering the poet an opportunity for the expression of varied feeling. Such poems as "The Former Age," "Truth," "Gentilnesse," and "Lak of Stedfastnesse" are of this lyric order, while even so long a poem as "The Book of the Duchesse," written as a lament on the death of Blanche, may be regarded as a lyric of the elegiac order. Whatever these poems may or may not be, as descriptive, they are more lyrical than aught else, and serve

to allow the critic to include the name of Chaucer in the roll of English lyrists, as indeed the first in time.

As we approach the Modern Era, we note the opening of a lyrical epoch in the reign of Henry the Eighth, and in the verse of Wyatt and Surrey. It is the Era of Preparation, opening the way for those later lyric developments that have made our literature so notable. The sonnet now appears for the first time, through the special agency of Howard, Earl of Surrey, which is enough in itself to give to the period substantive lyric repute, and insure a still further expression of it in the days of Elizabeth. It is a fact of interest that, at the very dawn of the Revival of Learning and of Poetry in England, much of the innermost spirit of the revival is revealed in the line of lyric verse as best expressing the essential character of that new and broader life which as early as the reign of Henry the Seventh began to manifest its presence. In Modern English Poetry proper, there are several distinctive Lyrical Periods,—the Elizabethan, Stuart, Augustan, Later Georgian, and Victorian. It is, indeed, this special lyrical impulse, coming from Italy into England, that introduced so auspiciously the

Age of Elizabeth and insured its high poetic type.

The *Elizabethan lyrics*. We notice in the Golden Age, an age of impulse and awakening, the coincident expression of lyric and dramatic verse, and often so related and fused that there is no better name for much of Elizabethan poetry than the lyrico-dramatic, as seen in those "old melodious lays" of which the American poet Whittier writes. In fact, the lyric movement was now fully under way, and no form of verse could be produced which was not affected by it. If Spenser penned an epic and the dramatists wrote plays, so clear and full was the lyric note in it all that the dullest ear could hear it; a remarkable feature of the period being that the lyrical spirit was so pronounced that no poet of any standing failed to evince it. Hence, the various collections of Songs and Sonnets that have been gathered out of the province of Elizabethan verse, some of the choicest of them coming from the secondary poets of the time, whose only claim to recognition lay in the fact that they caught the prevailing lyric impulse, and to the full measure of their ability reproduced and diffused it. It was so with Lodge and Greene and Briton and Daniel and Sidney and Donne and

Browne and Barnes and Drummond and numerous others, playwrights and sonneteers, who felt that a new poetic era had dawned, and that it called for a distinctly dramatic and emotional order of verse. Hence, Spenser penned his sonnets and his shorter idyllic poems to give this impulse full expression, as seen in his "Shepherd's Calendar," his "Complaints," and his spousal and bridal songs.

So Shakespeare, as a matter of course, embodied a portion of his capacious power in lyric, as seen in all his non-dramatic poems, such as "Venus and Adonis," as, also, through and through the texture of his dramas, and, most especially, in that remarkable series of sonnets on the basis of which he is entitled to rank as the leading lyricist as well as dramatist of his time.

It is this exquisite "lyrism," as the critics call it, which furnishes still another proof of the poetic wealth and scope of that remarkable man whom we know as Shakespeare, whose commanding genius seems to assume increasing area and potency as the centuries come and go.

The *Stuart* and *Augustan* eras, dating from 1603 to 1727, mark an interval of a century and a quarter of varied literary feature, but mainly of

a non-lyrical type. The notable work of Milton, in the troublous days of the Stuarts, serves to mark by contrast the otherwise general lyric decline, such secondary poets as Herbert and Wither and Donne and Carew and Prior and Gay and Davenant aiming to preserve a kind of lyric sequence in English letters.

Of Milton's lyrics suffice it to say, that, isolated as they were in the center of the general lyrical destitution of the time, nothing like them had as yet appeared. They serve to preserve the lyric history, and also prove that such an order of verse might appear under the most unfriendly conditions. It was thus that Milton, the last of the Elizabethans and the herald of the Georgians, stood midway between the two great lyrical eras, looking before and after.

No English poet ever appeared more opportunely both for the interests of poetry and those of general letters, nor is it at all difficult to see that, had he not appeared when he did and with the genius he had, the rise of the Romantic Era in English verse might have been deferred for half a century, and Victorian poetry been a much later and less notable development.

If the special Reasons for the decadence of the

Elizabethan lyric after the death of James the First be sought, some of them, at least, are clearly manifest.

One of them is found in the political character of the age, especially through the Stuart and Commonwealth eras, while, on through the revolution of 1688 and the partisan issues of the Age of Anne, the environment was anything but friendly to genuine idyllic product.

Still again, the wild *excesses* of the Revolution were enough to stifle all pure poetic fervor, so that no man, save Milton, could pen a lyrical masterpiece and maintain an exalted quality of poetic work. Pope in his Pastorals, and Dryden in his Odes, made but few attempts in lyrics of any success, while violent and abusive satire served to reveal the extravagant temper of the time.

Moreover, the age was one of prose, especially so in the Commonwealth and Augustan eras, the revolutionary influences and polemic character of the era demanding it, as also the 'revolutionary influences that prevailed after the dominance of poetry in the Golden Age. To this prose development, Milton himself contributed, while Temple and Dryden, Swift and Addison, gave it a per-

manent place and repute in English letters. In the meantime, the lyric interest, though in abeyance, was still existent, quietly preparing for new expression. When, at the close of the first quarter of the eighteenth century, George the Second came to the throne, in 1727, this new expression was demanded by the logic of events, and the publication of the poems of Beattie and Goldsmith, in 1761, ushered in the second lyrical age of English letters, the accession of George the Third, in 1760, marking the coincidence of English Government and English Letters.

In the *Later Georgian Era* (1727-1837), we come to what is called, by way of eminence, the "New Poetry," as distinct from that immediately antecedent to it; what Mr. Gosse has well described, in the phrase the "Dawn of Naturalism," as distinct from the mechanism of the age preceding; the new spirit of a new era, sharply distinguished in tone and aim from the poetic canons established by Dryden and Pope. In fact, we are standing here at the rise of the Romantic School, at the point of transition from the classicism of the Augustan Age to the romanticism of the Georgian. The fact of interest in our studies at this point is, that this radical change of poetic

spirit and ideal expressed itself primarily and mainly in the sphere of lyric verse; the very characteristic of the lyric as spontaneous and emotional asserting itself as the chief characteristic of the new economy. Thus the terms "Romanticism" and "Lyrism" are synchronous and synonymous; the birth of Burns, in 1759, just a year preceding the coronation of George the Third, giving all needed promise of a new awakening in the realm of English balladry. Already, in the reign of George the Second, manifest signs of the new and higher movement were at hand, in Thomson's "Seasons," in Shenstone's "Schoolmistress," and in the general temper of the time. The publication, in 1765, of Percy's "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry," a virtual reproduction of the Old English specimen of lyric, served, at one and the same time, to recall the nation to its earlier poetic life, and to stimulate anew the specific idyllic drift of the age. It is not at all strange, but strictly in the line of literary law and sequence, that, when this "Liberal Movement" in English verse fairly opened, scores of poets of greater and lesser note should have responded to the poetic demand and added to the expanding volume of native lyric. Hence, the verse of

Crabbe and Campbell, of Coleridge and Cowper, the ballads of Moore, and the phenomenal work of Byron and Wordsworth and Burns. Sir Walter Scott's "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border," in the reign of George the Third, confirmed the lyric purpose of the antecedent era of Percy's "Reliques," reinstating the Old English lyric in Modern English days, and revealing to the literary public the important fact that English lyric was as old as English history and letters and, in a sense, expressed, as no other poetic form could have done, the distinguishing features of English character and life.

Nor was this great lyric development altogether without its obstacles. 1. Something of the formal influence of Augustan days still remained. 2. Moreover, the second classical period of German literature was exactly coterminous with the rise of this anti-classical English movement. 3. Still further, the increasing prominence of prose, and, often, on the philosophic and technical side, is notable, appearing in such works as Kames' "Elements of Criticism," Blackstone's "Commentaries," Burnet's "Origin of Language," Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations," and the philosophy of Reid and Priestley and Dugald Stewart.

4. Lastly, there was a general movement of the age as modern toward the dominance of the material and practical. All this was anti-poetical, and especially anti-lyrical, and, yet, the lyric impulse was pronounced enough to assert its claims and hold its course well on through the period to the opening of the Victorian Age. Throughout this long reign of sixty years, the absence of any high expression of epic or dramatic verse is altogether noteworthy; the literary product of the time, with but few exceptions, being divisible into prose, and lyric verse. Herein lies one of the characteristics of the age, which is almost of the nature of an eccentricity, that it should express in such abundant measure the two extremes of literary art, — prose, and the most emotional form of verse; the practical and the passionate; the technical treatises of science and philosophy, and the simplest ballads of domestic life. A partial explanation of this anomaly lies in the fact that the preceding age of classicism expressed itself in prose, and the new spirit of the poetic Renaissance, as an era of mental and social freedom, expressed itself in ode and sonnet; it being reserved for the age succeeding to harmonize these extremes and reveal the presence of literary unity.

We are now brought to the final era, the *Victorian*, and the opening quarter of the last century; some of the lyrists of the Later Georgian Era extending their influence on toward Victorian times, and thus coördinating the two centuries. It was thus with Wordsworth and Scott and Byron, Shelley and Keats and Moore, the last of the Georgians and the vanguard of the Victorians, who set the form for the English lyric yet to come. They ever insisted, as a lesson to their successors, that no type of verse in English should ever be allowed to supersede the poetry of the heart and of human life as it is daily lived in the home and village and under the simplest social surroundings. Nor has the lesson been unheeded by the masters of Victorian verse,—by Mrs. Browning and Tennyson and Clough and the Rossettis, each one of whom has done notable work in the line of the lyric, most of whom have done their best work therein, and some of them their only worthy work; while, in American Literature as a branch of English Letters, the early and continuous supremacy of the lyric is a fact that impresses the most casual observer. In fine, in so far as poetry is concerned, the Victorian Age, throughout, is characteristically lyrical; the dra-

matic monologues of Browning, the dramas of Arnold and Tennyson, not being sufficiently numerous and successful to mark the poetic feature of the time. Even with regard to Browning, the greatest intellectual force of the age in the sphere of verse, modern criticism is discovering more and more of that idyllic element that makes a poet impressive and imposing. The title of one of his collections — “Dramatic Lyrics” — is itself proof in point that, even in the drama, his deepest feelings as a lyrist were enlisted. They might as justly be called Lyrical Dramas. So, in the collections “Dramatic Romances” and “Dramatis Personæ,” the same lyrico-dramatic factor is apparent. In this lyrical area, as in no other, did Robert Browning and Mrs. Browning come into poetic sympathy, and aim at a common ideal; it being true of Mrs. Browning that, with the one exception of her long descriptive poem, “Aurora Leigh,” her entire poetic product was lyric. Even this poem has marked lyrical features. So, as to the classical and cultured Arnold, he would have in hand a difficult problem who aimed to disprove the assertion that his best poetic work was in the sphere of the reflective lyric, where he struggles to voice his deepest sentiments on God and man

and truth and destiny. His theory that poetry is impassioned truth well expresses the character of his poetic ideal, as mainly a lyric one, nor can one read far into the volume of Arnold's verse without hearing that clear and often pathetic "lyric cry" that sounded the keynote of much of his verse. Critics are still at work in determining the dominant type of Tennyson's verse, and that on which his fame is finally to rest. Is it in the semi-epical "Idylls," in "Harold" and "Becket" as dramas, or in his various lyrics, short and long, gay and grave? To us, the question is scarcely debatable, not only by reason of the fact that the larger part of his product is lyric, but that herein his poetic genius finds its fitting place and home, the best portions of his plays and narrative verse being the lyric portions. The titles of the collection, "English Idylls," "Ballads and Other Poems," indicate this. The earliest collection, "Poems, Chiefly Lyrical," might mark the character of his best endeavor; his poetic masterpiece, "In Memoriam," being the finest expression of English elegy. Thus have the later lyrists held themselves true to Elizabethan and Georgian models, and thus have they happily preserved the historic continuity and repute of English lyric verse.

A suggestion of interest emerges as to later English lyric verse,—that of Edwin Arnold, of Swinburne and Austin and Watson,—Is it maintaining the standard already established, and is it giving any valid promise of still larger results?

The four respective names we have cited are sufficient to indicate a high degree of lyric merit and promise. Of Swinburne it may safely be said, that, whatever meritorious work he has done in the classical or modern English drama, it is his lyrical verse that best entitles him to fame. His “*Studies in Song*” and “*Songs before Sunrise*” and “*Century of Roundels*” and “*Poems and Ballads*” have no superior in Victorian verse, either as to their internal idyllic character or their external artistic form, the richness and resonance of the rhythm being especially notable. Of Edwin Arnold, it may in justice be said, that in such collections as “*Pearls of Faith*” and “*Italian Idylls*” he has successfully embodied in lyric form much of that wealth of Asiatic imagery which appears so conspicuously in his “*Light of Asia*” and “*Light of the World*.” From a study of Alfred Austin’s “*Interludes*” and “*English Lyrics*” and “*Soliloquies in Song*” no candid critic can fail to see that, while the note they

strike is not Tennyson's, it is a genuine lyric note. Of the recently collected poems of Watson, who is a lyrist only, we may confidently affirm that he is maintaining the earlier English lyrical traditions of Chaucer and Spenser and Milton. If to these masters we add the names of Lang, Dobson, Buchanan, Noyes, and Masefield, we are amply warranted in indorsing the language of Stedman as he speaks of "that new lyrical cycle of achievement" which is to follow, as he believes, closely upon the ending of the Victorian Era.

Lyric poetry, as the poetry of the heart, makes its permanence assured. So long as human nature is what it is in its fundamental affections and passions, so long will the "lyric cry" be heard among us, and become, thereby, a literary as well as a moral necessity. Even when sensualism may prevail, as at the Restoration, or a materialistic philosophy, as in the closing decades of the last century, some Milton or Tennyson will arise to protest, in the lyrical strains of a "Comus" or "The Vision of Sin," against the prevailing profligacy, and recall the English people to their best antecedents and ideals.

IV

ELIZABETHAN DRAMATIC DEVELOPMENT

THE Golden Age of English Letters is made so especially by its distinctive dramatic development. Whatever excellence it may have had along other lines of verse, and in the sphere of prose, it is its dramatic character that at once attracts attention, and puts the student on the search after the causes sufficient to account for it; an age which had, as has been said, "many hundreds of pieces and more than fifty masterpieces." Taine, the eminent French critic of English literature, would make an application here of his notable threefold condition of the literary status of a nation — that of race, of epoch, and of environment. While dramatic ability, as general literary ability, may be, in part, assignable to natural causes — to genius, to special talent, and to certain innate aptitudes — Taine insists that the finally determining agencies are external, and so universally such that no order of genius is independent of them. Shakespeare, Dante, Homer, and Cervantes are thus as surely influenced by them, though not, perhaps, as

fully, as are the numerous inferior authors of a nation.

Thus, on the principle of *race*, the drama is more germane to certain peoples than to others. The Greek thus offers us a more excellent dramatic literature than the Latin, and the South-European continental nations, as a whole, a more excellent drama than the North-European, not only as a matter of literary history, but as a matter of racial instincts, capabilities, and tendency, antecedent to history and quite independent of it. As peoples, the one are more dramatic in spirit and function than the other. Nationally and racially, it is easier for them than for others to express their literary life along such lines and in superior forms. They are constitutionally dramatic, so that they must belie their inherited characteristics if they fail to reach decided results in this direction. In this respect, the English race may be said to stand midway between the North and the South of Europe, evincing some of the salient racial tendencies of each, while having distinctive dramatic capacities of its own.

So, as to the second condition, that of *epoch*, as determining both the form and quality of literary product at any given period, Lowell, in his essay

on Shakespeare, lays down a general principle which is here in point, as he says, "The first demand we make on whatever claims to be a work of art is, that it shall be in keeping"; and, he adds, "this may be either extrinsic or intrinsic." It is this principle of propriety, in its extrinsic form, that is here in place; so that the authorship shall be in "keeping" with the era in which it is produced, a synchronism and not an anachronism, the natural product of the age and the hour. Applying this principle historically, we would not expect to find in the Dark Ages of Europe that dramatic development which we find in later and more enlightened periods; nor, in despotic eras, what we find in those of free thought and general national rule; nor, in the earlier epochs of a literature, what we find in the later, when crude conditions give way to maturity, and experiment, to settled literary habit. The lighter forms of verse, the lyric and descriptive, may flourish in the earlier eras as they have historically done, and poetry appear antecedent to prose. Hence, the drama of England in the sixteenth century was timely, as it could not have been in the fifteenth or seventeenth. In fact, in no succeeding century has there been an opportune time for the English drama, even though

Dryden, Byron, Robert Browning, and Tennyson have done conspicuous work in that direction. Just why this is so is clear enough as to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but not so clear as to the nineteenth; one of the explanations, however, lying in the fact that the material civilization which prevailed in the last century encouraged the production of prose rather than verse, and, in verse itself, the lighter lyric forms.

The most sanguine among us are not rationally looking, at the opening of the twentieth century, for a reappearance of the Miltonic epic or Shakespearean drama. So, as to *environment*, one of the most favorite words of modern science and literature, one of those sociological terms which other interests have borrowed by which to express certain forms and measures of influence not otherwise explained. What is the habitat of literature, its homestead, the nature of its vicinage? Is it wholesome or unwholesome, incitive or repressive of that which lies dormant, awaiting expression? Are the surroundings favorable or unfavorable? Here and there, as in the case of Milton's great epic, in the sensuous days of Charles the Second, literature comes to high embodiment despite all adverse conditions, as men of bodily vigor will occasionally

be found in the most unsanitary districts. This, however, is not the law of life. Literature, if we may so express it, must have good air and an abundance of it, good soil in which to cast and cultivate its seed, sufficient light and heat to insure its growth. In a word, it must have, in all these particulars, a fair chance in its struggle for existence, if so be the fittest may survive and perpetuate its kind. Here, again, England in the sixteenth century was most fortunate, as Italy also was; so that the external aided the internal, and what we may call the topography of the literature was the best possible to enable authors to do their best work. Locality is one of the factors in all national development — educational, literary, and social. We speak correctly of the *genius loci*. There is the spirit of the place as well as of the people and the period, a something in the field itself in which we labor to stimulate or stifle exertion. Such are Taine's conditions, each having force, and together constituting a most important element in the interpretation of any literature.

To these, however, must be added a fourth, the *author himself*, in the sum-total of his personality, above all external conditions, be they as potent as they may. The production of great literary re-

- sults under the most unfriendly circumstances has been often enough illustrated in the history of literature to teach us that there are times when the author will prove himself superior to his antecedents, his epoch, and his environment, and confirm the priority of all personal factors. The production of "The Faerie Queene" amid the wild wastes and the wilder political disturbances of Ireland, or of "The Pilgrim's Progress" in the Bedford jail amid the civic commotions of the Commonwealth, is quite enough to attest the principle. Though genius is dependent somewhat on conditions, there is a sense in which, because it is genius, it is independent of them, and in the great opportunities of authorship takes them but little into account. Literature is one of the Humanities, and the human element is central, so that the best explanation of the Elizabethan dramatic development is the genius of the dramatists. In noting, more specifically, the Reasons for this special development of the drama at this era, we emphasize three or four of marked significance.
- The first is seen in the *revival of classical learning*, in that learning was then embodied more fully in the ancient languages than in any other one department of human investigation. More especially

was this true as to the Greek, consequent on the fall of Constantinople, in 1453, when the Greek language and literature were disseminated over Europe and the West. Hitherto, in the centuries preceding the fall of Rome and the fall of Constantinople, theology and philosophy were the prevailing studies, and the Latin, as the language of Rome and the Romish Church, was the dominant language of Europe. When the "new learning" came into prominence, in the days of Elizabeth, theology and philosophy became less and less Romish, and the Greek language, more and more prominent -- the language, it is to be noted, in which the best expressions of literature in dramatic form had appeared. These tragedies and comedies were the model of all Europe, so that the revival of Greek was the revival of the classical drama, as a standard form of verse. It was now, naturally, the ambition of the native English dramatists to do for England what Sophocles and Æschylus had done for Greece, to establish the drama as national, and on broad and lasting foundations. In connection with this revival, there came in the best results of medieval learning, especially as expressed in the great semi-dramatic poem of Dante. The coarser elements of medievalism were largely

disappearing, or were transformed by Bacon and others into more modern and attractive forms; so that, while the essential spirit of scholarship and literary inquiry remained, much of the bondage of the letter had disappeared. Dramatists, actors, and patrons of the stage now understood each other better than in the early days of the Miracle Plays and Mysteries, when religious bigotry so prevailed.

A second reason for this unwonted dramatic development is found in a *new awakening of the national mind and spirit*, awaiting, as it arose, the pen and voice of those who might be capable of appreciating and interpreting it. It was because of this demand for immediate and fitting interpretation, that it begat and fostered a distinctly dramatic tendency. We may thus call the essential type of this national revival, histrionic, possessed of scenic and delineative elements, needing the playwright and the open stage to embody and portray it. For the first time in its history, the Modern English nation may be said to have known itself — what it was, just where it stood in modern history, what was expected of it, and what it could reasonably do. In fact, there had been no Modern England previous to this. Modern English

statehood and Protestantism now began, as well as Modern English civilization, and so suddenly and fully that the impression was dramatic in its influence on the national mind. Scores of poets, receiving the new impulse, betook themselves to dramatic writing as the first necessity of the hour.

Hence, an additional reason for the special literary expansion now visible is found in the *emphasis of life* as related to literature. Never had the English nation been so thoroughly alive and so impelled, on every hand, to be what it was and do what it did, in the most vital forms. There was nothing in the line of indifference or an easy-going dependence on the past. It was the unique feature of the time, that the past was to be subordinate to the present, that the era was to be, in reality as well as in name and chronology, the Modern Era. All this, it is to be noted, tended to produce dramatic authorship, on the principle that action is the central element of the drama, the word itself meaning action, which is but another name for life. Hence, the comedy of the time was known, and is now known, as the "Comedy of Life and Manners." The tragedy of the time was nothing more nor less than the presentation of life on its serious side. So, the historical plays depicted the

story of the diversified life of man. Life itself is essentially dramatic, so that human experience in its manifold phases was the theme and content, as it was the imposing cause, of the Elizabethan plays.

— If to these various reasons we add a fourth, the *comprehensiveness of the era*, including the old and the new, the real and the ideal, the pagan and Christian, the native and foreign, all unified and fused into what we call the Elizabethan Age, we have a sufficient explanation of the age itself, of its fundamental quality as dramatic, and of its undisputed primacy, even yet, in the sphere of representative verse.

The second question of interest that arises is, *The Influence of this Sixteenth-century Drama on Other Forms of Contemporary Literature*. From the fact that it was central, it must have affected more or less closely every existent form of literature, and, mostly, those forms which stood nearest to it in type and aim.

Its influence on the prose of the period is, first of all, noticeable. Despite the fact that certain broad distinctions exist between prose and verse, as respectively metrical and unmetrical, there is an area common to them both, within the sphere,

especially, of poetical prose and didactic poetry. Hence, in Shakespeare's drama, as in some of Goethe's, prose is not only found coexistent with the poetry, but, at times, in prominent form, as in "Much Ado about Nothing," "As You Like It," and "The Merry Wives of Windsor," in which last play Falstaff discourses in prose with Mrs. Page and with Pistol and the other characters. In fact, he mingles prose and verse, as he mingles blank verse and rhyme, when, in accordance with his literary insight, the thought and purpose demand it. So the other dramatists of the time, of whom Jonson, in his "Cynthia's Revels" and "Silent Woman," is a notable example. So, Marlowe, in his "Doctor Faustus." Of Lyly's nine dramas, seven are in prose; these facts sufficing to show that the drama is not necessarily, though it is presumably, expressed in verse, and that, when the occasion or sentiment demands it, the poet passes freely into the prose writer. Herein lies the excellence of Blank Verse, as a poetic form, in that it is a kind of accepted compromise between specific prose and specific verse; being verse, in that it is metrical, and having, yet, a prose type, in that it is rhymeless. Hence, epic and dramatic verse have adopted it as their prevailing form,

while the lyric and descriptive are, in the main, in rhyme. So, the Drama and the Epic are related. In each of them, the three historic unities — of time, place, and action — are present, though the last of these is more prominent in the drama. Differing somewhat, in that the epic is mainly narrative and deals with the past, while the dramatic is mainly descriptive and deals with the present and is given in the form of dialogue, each of them, at times, crosses the border-line that separates them, minimizing all differences between them, so as to present a unified effect. Tragedy has an essentially epic element, on the side of moral sublimity, as the Historical Plays have such an element to the degree in which they are narrative. Spenser's "Faerie Queene," though a modified epic poem, has a distinctive dramatic feature; with its incidents, scenes, and characters, its seriousness and pleasantry, so as to make upon the reader a semi-dramatic impression. So, as to the Drama and the Lyric, as in the Sonnets of Shakespeare, essentially lyric, but partly dramatic; as in Spenser's "Shepherd's Calendar," a pastoral poem with dramatic elements, most of the playwrights of this era having done something in the sphere of lyric verse. In the Songs and Choruses of the drama,

this relation is especially conspicuous. The emotional element germane to tragedy is the central feature of the lyric. So, Humor and Satire as natural to Comedy are essentially lyric. Hence, it appears that, from whatever point of view we study it, dramatic literature in the Golden Age was central, affecting and affected by every other form of literature. Herein is another proof of the fact that the current opinion of criticism as to the superiority of the epic to all other forms of poetry is to be so far modified as to make it subordinate to the dramatic. Its status is, at least, an open question.

Coming now to a more definite survey of this affluent dramatic era, it is in place to note the individual dramatic poets who served, more or less successfully, to make the era what it was in our history. Shakespeare excepted as the central and inimitable exponent of the age, it is the critical habit to classify all other playwrights as Minor Authors, whether his predecessors, immediate contemporaries, or successors. Special care is, therefore, to be taken lest the phrase "Minor Elizabethan Dramatists" be falsely interpreted. The very fact that they are Elizabethan, giving to the Golden Age something of its excellence, is suffi-

cient to show that they are not to be underrated. So able a critic as Hazlitt devotes one-half of his "Elizabethan Literature" to these so-called secondary poets. Lamb, in his "Specimens of English Dramatic Poets," writes in a spirit even more decidedly favorable. More recently and, as if to secure a continued interest in these authors, Whipple, in his "Essays and Reviews," pays them a high eulogium; while substantially the last literary work which Lowell did consisted of a careful discussion of these poets, whom he calls "Old English Dramatists," thus anticipating a series now in preparation, under the title "The Best Plays of the Old English Dramatists." No better proof can be found that the term "Minor," as here applied, must be used relatively only, and in view of the unique position of Shakespeare at the time. So high was the standard established, that, in any other age, these secondary dramatists, secondary to Shakespeare only, would have been among the first of their order, as the best of them are, even yet, regarded as far above the intellectual average of any subsequent age. Though their work was not Shakespearean, it was invaluable, in separate instances closely bordering on Shakespearean form; while, as a body of playwrights,

their aggregate product was of a distinctive order. It is questionable whether Shakespeare himself would have been the peerless author that he was, apart from these forerunners and contemporaries. It is a well-known fact of literary history, that even Shakespeare's asserted preëminence was contested by contemporary critics, nor was it till a century later, in the days of Dryden, that this preëminence was accepted without question. It was the general representative work of Jonson and Marlowe, and the occasional masterly product of Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford and Webster and Massinger, Lodge and Peele and Chapman, that kept this open question before the English public on to the Age of Anne. A few suggestions as to these Minor Dramatists may serve to show the important place that they held in the literature of the time.

First of all, they were the *real exponents of their age*. This is true both in a literary and a mental sense, and especially true of those half-dozen among them who held the leading place. Particularly is it true of the Marlowe Group, as Shakespeare's immediate predecessors, that they heralded the coming epoch and prepared the way for it, using well what light they had, and marking a

definite dramatic advance over all that had, as yet, existed. Though not representative to the same degree that Shakespeare was, they were, still, representative, and thus in line with the general literary progress and the specific dramatic progress of the period. Moreover, as a rule, these dramatists were University men, and, thus, by liberal training, qualified to take their place and play their part in the new and broader economy. Some of them, by way of distinction, were known as "University Wits," and thus connected the literary life of the time with its scholarship and culture. Scarcely too much emphasis can be laid on the fact that, whatever the failings of these minor poets, they had enjoyed special intellectual training at Oxford and Cambridge, and not infrequently exhibit its good effects in their authorship. Here, again, the mastery of Shakespeare's mind and art is all the more amazing, in that he stood in no wise related to the great literary institutions of the nation.

Their *exceptional excellence in dramatic art* is, also, noteworthy. In the special province of versification or verse-structure they were, in the main, far in advance of their time, using the modern accentual method in preference to the older syllabic method, and thus revealing their independence of

classical models. Marlowe, at this point, is held in high repute, his "Tamburlaine" being the first English play in blank verse, as his "Edward the Second" was the first historical play of note. His "mighty line" was always effective, so that the iambic pentameter of later English verse became firmly established as the prevailing heroic measure. This inner harmony between the poetic structure and the sense was truly Shakespearean, and at no point do many of these minor dramatists so closely resemble their master.

It should, also, be noted that these so-called secondary poets were a *coöperative school of workers*, and thus unified and intensified their dramatic power. Thus Beaumont and Fletcher, Chapman and Dekker, Webster and Dekker, Middleton and Rowley, Nash and Marlowe, composed their plays in common. They constituted a real Authors' Club or Guild, working toward common ends and on similar methods, while not surrendering, at all, their individual tastes and aims. They were, for the time, real fellow-craftsmen, partly, of necessity, and, partly, by preference and fraternal feeling. Thus Shakespeare himself worked conjointly with Jonson and Marlowe, his two greatest dramatic contemporaries. Indeed, the measure of this mu-

tual indebtedness can never be fully determined. That it existed at all is proof in point that there was, in the main, good fellowship between the great master and his colleagues, so that the current criticism to the contrary must be modified. It is a fact of Elizabethan history that Shakespeare, when first in London, devoted most of his effort to the revision of the work of his inferiors.

In fine, the more we study the real character of this great dramatic age, the more distinctly it appears that much of its greatness lay in the fact, that, Shakespeare apart, there was at work a body of playwrights masterful enough to give repute to any age in which they lived, and justly classified in later history as "Minor" only on the principle that the age was strictly exceptional, and that the imposing presence of the greatest dramatist of all literature overshadowed every lesser light.

From this brief discussion as thus outlined, a question of peculiar interest emerges, as to Shakespeare's *indebtedness to other authors*. The vexed question of originality in an author is still an open one — what it is; what its relation to existing opinion is; to what degree and how an author must evince it justly to be called original, and

whether or not it is compatible with a good degree of deference to established authority. Have we any strictly original treatise on Poetics since Aristotle, or on Sublimity since Longinus? Are Carlyle and Emerson original because they state old truths in new forms, or how is the critic to distinguish, in Tennyson's "Idylls of the King," as based on the old Arthurian Legends, what is original and what imitative? In fact, Aristotle himself insists that poetry, and thereby he means dramatic poetry, is essentially an imitative art, the poet being but an expositor of existing truths. Be this as it may, when we come to the study of Shakespeare, we are, at first, jealously careful to insist that he, above all others, was out and out original, a veritable genius in the province of the drama, independent of all preceding and contemporary aids. The most cursory examination of his writings, however, is enough to disabuse our minds of this *a priori* supposition, so that we are now prepared to read from so favorable a critic as White, what would at first have startled us, "that Shakespeare, the greatest of the creative minds who have left their mark upon the ages, produced nothing new in design." In this language, it is to be carefully noted that Shakespeare is

called creative, his originality consisting mainly in something else than the design or invention of the material of the plays. White interprets for us his own language as he adds: "His supreme excellence was attained simply by doing better than any one else that which others had done before him." To the same effect, Professor Moulton, in his work entitled "Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist," insists that the staple or "raw material" of the great poet's drama, the *materia dramatica*, was scarcely Shakespeare's at all, but gathered by others before him, and utilized by him in that inimitable way to which he only was competent. His genius lay in the fact that he was beyond imitation, though himself appropriating all that came to his hand that he needed in the evolution of his work.

The proofs of this dependence are not far to find. In his first non-dramatic poem, "Venus and Adonis," he resorted to Ovid's "Metamorphoses" for the substance of the story. So, as to the non-dramatic poem immediately following it, "The Rape of Lucrece," Shakespeare having recourse to Chaucer and Lydgate and the earlier ballads for the current story of Lucretia the chaste; it being possible that he may have been acquainted with

such classical accounts of the story as are found in the "Fasti," rendered into English in 1570 and thus accessible to all later writers in English. The French historian Guizot, in his instructive work "Shakespeare and his Times," gives a brief analysis of several of his tragedies, historical plays, and comedies, emphasizing in each this dependence of the author on antecedent history. "Romeo and Juliet" looks back to "La Gioletta," rendered into English, and made the subject of an English poem by Brooke, in 1562. "Hamlet" reminds the reader of the History of Denmark by Saxo Grammaticus, accessible, in translated form, in the sixteenth century. "King Lear" recalls the name of Holinshed and, prior to him, that of Geoffrey of Monmouth, and Ina, King of Saxons. In "Macbeth," Holinshed is again the authority. In "Julius Cæsar," Shakespeare may have consulted an existing play of that name by Sterline. In "Othello," we are led back to Cinthio's "Hecatommithi," regarding which Guizot remarks, "There is not a single detail in Shakespeare's tragedy which does not occur, also, in Cinthio's novel."

As to the Historical Plays, it goes without saying, that Shakespeare availed himself of all accepted authorities on the respective kings and eras.

Turning to the Comedies, the "Merchant of Venice" reminds us of various sources, such as the "Gesta Romanorum," and Giovanni's "Pecorone." Of "The Merry Wives of Windsor," it is said "that a number of novels may contest the honor of having furnished the poet with the substance of the adventure." "The Tempest" finds its occasion in the same antecedent Italian Romance. "As You Like It" reminds us of "The Tale of Gamelyn," of Chaucerian days, finding its plot in Lodge's "Rosalind." In "The Winter's Tale," the dramatist draws freely on Greene's "Pandosto." "Cymbeline" depends, in part, on Holinshed; on the semi-mythical material of Medieval Romance, and of Boccaccio's version of the story, in "The Decameron." So "Much Ado About Nothing" borrows from Ariosto and Bandello. "A Midsummer Night's Dream" recalls Chaucer's "Knight's Tale," as, also, Ovid and Plutarch. So "Twelfth Night" makes a modified use of Italian authors, so frequent a source of reference of Shakespeare that we must argue therefrom to his wide knowledge of its history and literature.

Thus Shakespeare's indebtedness is revealed. If to this form of aid the fact is added, that, in not a few instances, the poet seemed to seek the aid

of his fellow-dramatists, in the composition and final setting of a play, as he in turn gave them aid, it is clear that this indebtedness has not as yet been sufficiently emphasized. Herein, moreover, is shown Shakespeare's poetic wisdom, and his economy in the use of material, in that he subordinated to his service all truth and fact that he could find, while yet maintaining his natural powers intact. Here was, indeed, an evidence of genius, in that no other poet could have done this as he did. It was a genius of adaptation or utilization, and, in its place and way, an expression of genius as valuable as that of absolute creative skill. Professor Dowden speaks of the Mind and Art of Shakespeare. His art as well as his mind revealed his genius, and his manifestations of it in unison produced the matchless product that we have in his dramas.

Thus in Shakespeare and the Minor Dramatists alike is seen the special dramatic development of the Elizabethan Age, each contributing in his way to the aggregate result, and each acknowledging in just degree the principle of interdependence in authorship. Had it not been that many of these dramatists were men of a low type of morals; that not a few of them were absolutely dependent on the Court for a livelihood, and thus more or less

servile in their literary work; and that the prevailing vice of Euphuism affected much of their literary product, the Golden Age would have been still more phenomenal in our dramatic history, and all efforts to reproduce it still more hopeless.

As it is, however, its limitations all conceded, it has as yet no counterpart in our later literary history and favorably compared at the time with any contemporary Continental drama.

That such an era should not be continuous through the later history was to be expected; so that, as we stand at the opening of the seventeenth century, evidences of decadence already appear. Such is the law of life and of literature, the law of action and reaction, of decline and disappearance. In due time, however, reviving forces should assert themselves, and once again, a race of poets appear who should take up the history of dramatic progress where once it was interrupted, and, under the newer impulse of succeeding eras, fully reproduce the genius of Shakespeare and his time.

V

ENGLISH DRAMATIC VERSE AFTER SHAKESPEARE

THIS era includes the comprehensive period between Elizabeth and Victoria, an era of over three centuries, as contrasted with the half-century of the drama of the Golden Age, in which contrast is found a sufficiently striking difference between the dramatic character and product of the respective periods. There is a sense, indeed, in which English literature may be said to have had but one specifically dramatic age, all post-Shakespearean dramatic product being properly classified as secondary. In this respect, English dramatic verse is strikingly distinct from English lyric as a steadily progressive literary evolution, and more in keeping with English epic, which reached as high a status in the poetry of Milton in the seventeenth century as it has done in any subsequent era.

Hence, it may, at the outset, be noticed that it is quite impossible to speak of the Historical Development of the Modern English Drama, as we speak of that of Modern English Prose or English Lyric, in the sense of discovering a progressive

evolution of better and better product. If we call the pre-Elizabethan age preparative, as it was, and the Elizabethan, culminative, then all that is post-Elizabethan must be, at its best, but a little more than a reproduction, in varied and somewhat inferior form, of antecedent product. When it is said by Ward, that "all literary growths are continuous," it would be sufficient to show in the case of the later English drama that it is not strictly a growth at all, but rather a literary history with its diversified features of progress and decline. It is this fact that Ward himself has in mind when he adds: "In literary, as in all other history, it is generally difficult to say where growth passes into decline, and where, in the midst of exuberant life, the first signs announce themselves of the beginning of the end." In other words, growth had ceased by "passing into decline," and it becomes the object of the student's researches to follow carefully the course of the decline and note any deviations from it to that which is better.

In any case, the first fact of interest as to the drama before us is, that it is a record of decline, however complex and concealed the causes of such a decline may be. These are found, in part, (1) in the uniform principle of literary reaction, (2) in

the increasing emergence of non-dramatic conditions, and (3) in the necessary limitations of the human mind, making it incapable of the prolonged exercise of such a high order of literary genius, the literary history, in the main, following the course of the civic and social history of the nation. Be the causes what they may, what is called the Decadence of the Drama had definitely begun. The volume "From Shakespeare to Pope," by Gosse, is substantially applicable to dramatic poetry, as a specific form, well called "a mundane" order of poetry, seeking its sources in purely secular and temporal conditions. Saintsbury classifies the plays of the century into four periods,—those of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger, respectively. The last of these is the era of decadence, becoming more and more decadent as the century closes. The Shakespearean plays of the period are sufficient proof of such a decadence, evincing its progress by an ever-increasing number of mere dramatic adventurers and poetasters. What is known among the critics as the Artificial English Drama now prevailed, when the masters had disappeared, and the novices had assumed control.

THE EARLY STUART AND THE PURITAN PERIOD

As we enter this era, including the reigns of James I. and Charles I., there is an explanation of decadence, as seen in the Loss of National Prestige. "Queen Elizabeth and the glories with which her name was identified seem all but forgotten." "Had England, at the time," writes Ward, "taken a resolute part in the great European struggle, the traditions of a great national epoch must have counted for much." "As it was," he adds, "the pacific policy of James, and the uncertainty in the councils of Charles, doomed England to virtual inaction in the midst of a tremendous European crisis, and the ancient glories rusted in the national consciousness." The stirring memories of Elizabethan days, of the Spanish Armada, and the triumphs of British arms were but dimly recalled by the Stuart kings. Hence the drama was out of sympathy with the current thought of the time, either at home or on the Continent. It was denationalized, isolated, and unsympathetic, localized in era, and positively restricted in the free expression of its national life. In the reign of James I., it is true, some of the old Elizabethan playwrights were still at work, — Beaumont, Fletcher, Jonson, Massinger, and Webster; as, in that of Charles

I., there were Ford and Jonson, Massinger and Marlowe. The premonitions of decline, however, were at hand, hastened by the political disturbances of the time, and the approach of the Puritan non-dramatic era. Though some encouragement to the higher drama was given by James I., and though the tastes of Charles I. and his queen were somewhat literary and in sympathy with true dramatic development, the environment was, in the main, unfriendly. The flagrant corruptions of the Court of James had left its baneful influence upon that of his successor; wider and wider distances were drawn between the classes and the masses. The best elements were in abeyance to the worst, until the English stage and drama were at length overwhelmed by the outbreak of the Revolution of 1640. Manifestly, the higher drama could not flourish under such conditions, despite the efforts of the last of the Elizabethans to sustain it. Even in comedy, the comedy of character gave way to the comedy of manners and intrigue and verbal artifice. Playwrights vied with each other in mere fertility of production and in the inverse ratio of its literary merit. Despite the efforts of Herbert and Chillingworth, Fuller, Taylor and Milton, the moral atmosphere of the time reached such a measure of

defilement that it was impossible for a man of conscience "to draw his breath freely."

The culmination of this series of movements expressed itself in the Puritan Period of 1649-60, which, though brief, is crowded with critical events, historical and literary; stands midway between the monarchy of the early Stuarts and the anarchy of the later; contains within itself the extremes of evil and of good, and is, even yet, in all its bearings, something of a puzzle to literary and civic historians. Of dramatic history, it may be said that it had none. Seven years prior to its opening, in 1642, theaters were closed by due process of law, and not reopened until the accession of Charles II., in 1660. It was, indeed, a penal offense even to be a spectator of plays. This is not the place in which to discuss the Puritan protest against the English drama, the most charitable conclusion being that, with pure motive and a just occasion in the excesses of the time, some modification of their drastic method might have conduced to wholesome issues. What is known as the Anti-Theatrical literature of the time is of this violent and extreme character, culminating in Prynne's "Histrio-Mastix" (The Players' Scourge), in which he holds that all plays originate with the

devil, and contribute directly to his dominance in the world. In an age when Taylor, Baxter, and Bunyan were writing, it is not strange that, by way of reaction from the profligacy that had prevailed, these serious-minded Covenanters should have denounced all plays and players as of the devil, and in their zeal for Christian honor have exhibited an unchristian temper.

Nor is it any the less strange that, when the Puritans had had their day, and Charles II. returned from France with the latest schooling in Parisian ethics, all prior records should have been surpassed, and the English theater, now reopened, should have become the synonym for mental imbecility and moral debauchery.

THE LATER STUART DRAMA — RESTORATION DRAMA

This extends from the restoration of Charles II., in 1660, to the death of Dryden, in 1700, continuing its influence, more or less directly, into the reign of Queen Anne on to its close in 1714. As already suggested, in accounting for the special type of drama introduced at this time, scarcely any further cause need be assigned than that of Reaction. The Restoration itself was a reactionary movement in English politics and life, as contrasted

with the immediately preceding Puritan Period. The restrictions of the Commonwealth could no longer be tolerated by a monarch and a court of the Restoration type, and this unbridled desire for fullest liberty naturally expressed itself in the re-opening of the theaters, in 1660. Just as the Puritans, at the opening of the interregnum, in 1649, represented a reactionary anti-dramatic movement against the antecedent dramatic order; so, in the Later Stuart Era, we note a reactionary dramatic movement against the antecedent anti-dramatic order, literary history here repeating itself, and in obedience to what we are wont to call an inevitable law of providence. Short as the era is, its position midway between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries of English history and literature gives it a character and influence altogether above its intrinsic merits, and makes it all the more essential that the interpretation of its place should be a just one.

Mr. Gosse, in describing the conditions of the English drama after the Restoration, remarks, "that the drama took a place in English Literature during the last third of the seventeenth century relatively more prominent than it has ever taken since." "Certain sections of society," he adds,

“were passionately addicted to theatrical amusements. Their appetite had been whetted by eighteen years of enforced privation.” This imperious demand, of course, created a corresponding measure of supply. One of the chief reasons why dramatic literature now so prevailed was the specifically practical one of its immediate money returns. Scores of playwrights had been impatiently waiting for just such a demand for their theatrical product, and when the conservative policy of the Puritans gave way to the free indulgence of the Stuart Era these poverty-stricken authors emerged from their retreats with manuscripts in readiness, and the English market was fairly burdened with the weight of their dramatic wares. This is one reason, among others, why, on the one hand, so many authors of the day were playwrights, and, on the other, why so few of them attained to anything like literary eminence in dramatic verse.

If we inquire as to the characteristics of these Restoration plays, they may all be summarily expressed in the one word *Servility*, — mental, moral, literary, and official. The Restoration was that of Charles II. and his court, and monarchy itself was out-monarchied by the manner in which that which was written, in prose and verse, was written in ab-

ject deference to the Stuart will. It was the king and the courtiers and their immediate followers who suggested the themes and the general tenor of the tragedy and comedy; who smiled or frowned as the plays pleased or displeased them; on whom authors and actors were alike dependent for their daily living, in that they created by their influence the public demand for the stage. The drama was thus, out and out, servile: a drama of the court and the crown, and not of the great English commonalty; a drama of civil and religious partisanship, and not of unshackled opinion in church and state; mentally and morally inferior, because servile and incapable, thereby, of rising to anything like poetic primacy. It was, to this extent, wholly un-Elizabethan. It is in keeping with this view that Ward writes, "Had the Restoration drama been in true sympathy with the Elizabethans, it might have reached a commanding level of excellence," by which he means, had it been more catholic and independent, it would have been nobler and thoroughly in line with the best English traditions. "It is," he adds, "because it was untrue to these traditions that its history is that of a decay such as no brilliancy can conceal."

More specifically, he gives us a satisfactory triple

explanation of this decline, when he states, that this later drama was "untrue to the higher purpose of the dramatic art, to the nobler tendencies of the national life, and to the eternal demands of the moral law." Each of these instances of unfaithfulness, it may be said, was but the result or evidence of that base servility that stifled all genius and patriotism and art. When Collier issued, in 1698, his "Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage," it was not altogether against specific moral abuses that he was contending, but against the entire spirit and motive of the drama of his day as unworthy of the antecedent history of England, as un-English as it was un-Elizabethan. High dramatic art gave way to the lowest forms of Sentimental Comedy; and the direful teachings of Hobbes, that conscience is a myth, and right and wrong unfounded antitheses, became the current doctrine of the hour. It was the High Noon of imbecility and immorality, when the English stage, according to Henry Irving, was "a mere appendage of court life, a mirror of patrician vice hanging at the girdle of fashionable profligacy."

Of dramatists busily at work, in this intervening era, there is no lack, as almost every writer of any

literary talent made the attempt, at least, to meet the increasing dramatic demand. Hence the names of Etherege, Aphra Behn, Davenant, Wycherley, Farquhar, Vanbrugh, Otway, Lee, Southerne and Congreve. High over all, in general and special gifts, the name of John Dryden stands, the semi-dramatic work of Milton giving him, also, an historic place among the Restoration dramatists. Of these several authors it is not within our present purpose to speak. Suffice it to say, that they reveal, in part, the fact that dramatic literature was a representative poetic type of the time; that the great majority of these playwrights serve but to show what imposing proportions poetic mediocrity can assume, and to prove the truth of Ward's statement "that of all forms of literary art the drama can least reckon without its responsibilities." Here and there, in this vast volume of dramatic product, an author or a play of distinctive merit appears, the nearest approximation to the excellence of Dryden appearing in the work of Congreve, author of "The Mourning Bride," "The Double Dealer," "Love for Love," whom Dryden praises in unstinted terms, to whom Pope dedicates his "Iliad," and of whom Voltaire says, "that

he raised the glory of comedy to a greater height than any English writer before or since."

It was Dryden, however, who was the "hero of the age and the stage," as central in later Stuart literary history as Shakespeare was in the earlier, and Sheridan in the following era; a dramatic critic as well as composer; a writer of tragedies, comedies, prologues and epilogues; the accepted censor of his age; and, despite the ridicule of Buckingham in his "Rehearsal," possessed of undoubted literary genius, though often prostituted to the basest ends. It was reserved for Dryden to illustrate, at once, the servility and scurrility of the Stuart drama, and, also, to redeem its name from the charge of mental mediocrity. The attempt of Milton in "Samson Agonistes" to take part in dramatic work is as interesting as it is anomalous; as if in the character of the last of the Elizabethans, he would recall his contemporaries to the forgotten traditions of their fathers; protest, in the name of truth and virtue, against the riotous rule of the Philistines in literature, and ominously point out to Charles II. the certain fate of those who set at naught the laws of God and man. In the same volume with "Paradise Regained," and issued in 1671, but a few years after the publication, in 1667,

of "Paradise Lost," this great English champion of purity and truth persisted in uttering his message in the ears of a king and court utterly indifferent thereto, absorbed as they were in the dissolute dramas of Aphra Behn and Nathaniel Lee.

It is not strange that this order of things required nothing less than the Great Rebellion of 1688, to nullify, in part at least, its baneful influence and institute a new and better order. The substitution of the House of Orange for the Stuart Dynasty was not only the substitution of limited monarchy for absolutism, of Protestantism for Romanism, and of mental freedom for mental bondage, but it was the introduction of an entirely new spirit in literature, and, thus, of a distinctively preparative literary movement, as the later century approached. Even the Orange dramatists felt its influence, while the protestations of Collier became, at length, so effective that authors and actors alike were placed under bonds to keep within the limits of moral propriety. Dryden himself acknowledged the substantial truth of the charges against him, and, in the two years of his life yet remaining, did what he could to redeem his record and that of the age which he represented. In the closing year of the century, 1700, Dryden died, and the Restora-

tion drama passed into history. The way was now fully opened for the Augustan Era and the English Drama of the Eighteenth Century.

THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY DRAMA

In so far as time is concerned, this period extends from the opening of Queen Anne's reign, in 1702, well on toward the close of the reign of George III., its actual ending in 1820 taking us well into the first quarter of the century following. Hence, we notice, at the outset, that, in so far as the drama is concerned, much of the activity of the Stuart Era proper passed over into the eighteenth century, such dramatists as Wycherley, and Cibber, and Vanbrugh, and Farquhar, and Rowe producing plays within each era, thus serving to connect the drama of the two centuries. This is especially true as to English Comedy. As Ward states it, "Both what was weakest and what was brightest in the English Comedy of the Eighteenth Century already existed in the Seventeenth." Hence, it is urged, "that Goldsmith has a predecessor in Farquhar, and that Sheridan is but the legitimate successor of Congreve and the adopter of Vanbrugh," the rise of Sentimental Comedy, as fairly attributed both to Steele and

Cibber, finding thus its rightful place in the period preceding.

No student of this era can fail to note the dramatic influence of Dryden, in the sphere of comedy, the acknowledged leader of the Stuart Era. In so far as tragedy is concerned, these conclusions must be modified, the tragic excellence of the Age of Dryden finding no worthy successor nor parallel in the later age. "The tragedy of the eighteenth century," writes Saintsbury, "is almost beneath contempt, being, for the most part, a faint French echo or else transpontine melodrama, with a few plaster-cast attempts to reproduce an entirely misunderstood Shakespeare." Indeed, it may be said, that, although the revival of interest in the Shakespearean drama, in the seventeenth century, was mainly due to the agency of Dryden, and, though actors such as Garrick and authors such as Rowe and Addison did what they could to reinstate the influence of this "great national genius," still, the drama of this century, especially in tragedy, cannot be said even to remind us of Shakespeare, either in content or spirit. The century is, in no sense, dramatic, as was the Elizabethan or even the Stuart Era. From the very opening of the century, literary interests assumed other and more ab-

sorbing types, partly due to changes in political sentiment and social life, and partly to a decided decadence of dramatic genius itself. If we seek for the causes of such a decadence, we note that the century opened as a distinctive prose era in *The Spectator* and *The Tatler* and similar collections, while, within the province of poetry itself, the formal school of Pope was engaging the chief attention of the critics, and impressing itself upon the literature of the nation at large.

Thus, if we call for a list of our eighteenth-century dramatists, we shall be surprised to find that the number of names, all told, is a limited one, while that of the masters in the art may be reduced to here and there a name. According to Schlegel, a genius of the first rank in tragedy did not appear in the century. "Why has this revival of the admiration of Shakespeare," asks Schlegel, "remained unproductive for dramatic poetry," his suggestive answer being "that he has been too much the subject of astonishment, as an unapproachable genius who owed everything to nature and nothing to art." "Had he been considered," he adds, "more from an artistic point of view, it would have led to an endeavor to understand the principles which he followed in his practice and

to an attempt to master them." The causes of the absence of Shakespearean genius in the eighteenth century lie deeper down, we submit, and farther back than this language of Schlegel's would argue. The fact of its absence is, however, a potent one. Here and there are visible traces of dramatic power, sufficient to awaken the interest of the inquiring student and make it possible for him to prophesy the near appearance of a better day. Not to mention the names of those already cited as properly belonging to both centuries, such as Congreve and Cibber, we note the names of Addison and Steele, and, especially, of Goldsmith and Sheridan, who may be said to be the two specially dramatic authors of the century proper, the dramatic translations of Goethe and Schiller by Scott and Coleridge, respectively, and the dramatic verse of Byron properly belonging to the succeeding age.

Of the dramatic genius of Addison, as seen in his "Cato," it may be said, that, despite the favor with which the tragedy was received by the Augustan public, it cannot justly be regarded as reaching anything more than average merit. Prepared with a view to reinstate classical ideals in English verse and, yet, prepared amid the political agitations of the time, it cannot be said to have

been either a literary or a political success, its contemporary repute being strangely due to the fact that each of the warring factions of the day, the Whig and Tory, insisted on claiming it as an exponent of its party principles, a tragedy full, as Ward expresses it, of "effective commonplaces" and so exalting French and classical models in dramatic composition as to throw discredit on the old Elizabethan models and thereby serve to check that Shakespearean movement in whose advance alone the future excellence of the English drama was to lie. With Addison, tragic composition was a left-handed and an unnatural exercise, his gifts and mission lying in quite other literary spheres.

Of Steele, author of "The Conscious Lovers," "the first English comedy," according to Schlegel, "that can be called moral," suffice it to say, that he shares, with Cibber, the honor of having introduced Sentimental Comedy, and, with Addison, the honor of having effectively rebuked the literary immorality of the age.

Goldsmith's dramatic work was not the ablest part of his product as a writer. Author of "The Good-natured Man," of which he himself was a signal example, and of the still abler composition "She Stoops to Conquer," it is just to say that

each of them is a worthy expression of English comedy, and holds its place even yet in general literary esteem. The first of them, according to Johnson, was "the best comedy seen on the English stage for forty years" (1728-68), while the second, according to Gosse, is "one of the great comedies of the world." What Goldsmith did, he did with high motive and on sound literary principles. All defects conceded, his dramatic work is far above the average of his time, and may justly be cited in connection with that of Sheridan, the leading dramatic exponent of the time; author of "The Rivals," written at twenty-two, and of "The School for Scandal," written at twenty-four; known among critics "as the best existing English comedy of intrigue," each of them being still in favor on the boards of the English and the American theater. Based on the best examples of Restoration Comedy, and on such a model as Molière, they justly remind us of Elizabethan traditions, and justify a hopeful outlook into the following century.

THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY DRAMA

This is a period so recent that but little need be said as to its type and merits. This much, how-

ever, may be safely ventured, that it cannot be called a high order of drama, despite the fact that a goodly number of workers have been busy throughout the century, so that the dramatic product is by no means limited. As Saintsbury states it, "There has always been something out of joint with English nineteenth-century tragedy." The same might be said of comedy. The drama is academic and artificial, rather than popular and natural, and the spontaneous expression of native genius, the "mere by-work" of most of the poets, and not their legitimate literary calling. From the fact of the high esteem in which such a secondary dramatist as Knowles was held, it may be argued that the critical standard was lamentably low, that tragedies and comedies devoid of dramatic impulse and vigor were classified as representative. This inferiority is somewhat remarkable when we recall, as has been suggested, the large number of English poets of the last century who were dramatic authors,—Byron, author of "Cain"; Shelley, in his "Prometheus Unbound"; Coleridge, in his "Fall of Robespierre"; Southey, in "Sappho"; Bulwer, in "Richelieu"; Landor, in "Roderic"; Matthew Arnold, in "Empedocles on Etna"; Browning, in his Monologues; Mrs. Browning, in

her renderings of "Euripides" and "Prometheus"; Scott, in his translation of Goethe; and Tennyson, in his several dramatic productions; while to these may be added the names of authors now working among us. Here is a wide variety and volume of effort, suggesting a favorable comparison with the days of Elizabeth, and yet a living critic, with this product before him, affirms of Browning's "Blot in the 'Scutcheon," that it is the one play of the century which shows any tragic vigor in its central part. Of these poets it may be said, without exception, that they were dramatic writers without being dramatists; that their plays were delineative, and not essentially dramatic; that some of them, as Browning, wrote monologues or monodramas only; that others, such as Scott, translated dramas, and that others still, as Landor and Shelley, failed to apprehend aright the structural side of this order of verse. It is thus that we read "that Byron's tragedies are not the worst part of his work"; that "Scott had no dramatic faculty"; that "Shelley's 'Cenci' is not actable"; and that the drama of the century as a whole lacks the quality of greatness. These are just conclusions when the reader sits down to find

in this product a half-dozen specimens that may faintly remind him of Marlowe and Jonson.

The comparative failure of Tennyson in this field is sufficient evidence that dramatic genius was not one of the gifts of the gods to the England of his day.

CONTEMPORARY BRITISH DRAMA

Of the Contemporary British Drama, represented in Swinburne, Austin, Jones, Phillips, and others, suffice it to say, that it has merit, though not masterly merit; that, while indicating an advance upon the later Victorian Era, it is not Elizabethan. The strength of the opening century lies elsewhere,—in lyric verse, as of old, and, especially, in historical, critical, and philosophical prose. Possibly, under conditions as yet non-existent, English verse may assume epic and dramatic eminence, and remind us, once again, of Milton and Shakespeare.

VI

THE ROMANTIC ELEMENT IN ELIZABETHAN LETTERS

"It is curious," writes an English author, "to trace the gradual transformation of historical literature. Its earliest type is invariably mythical or legendary and the form in which it then appears is universally poetical." This semi-historical, or romantic feature, as we shall call it, forms an important one at the very origin of English poetry as national in the days of Chaucer and is visible in marked expression in the Golden Age of English Prose and Verse, and even later still as the history develops. If we look for the explanation of its presence in Elizabethan days, it is not far to find. This opening era of our literature came so early in our national history as modern, and came, in some respects, so suddenly, and in such pronounced fullness of literary product, that there was scarcely time for the gradual transition from the pre-Elizabethan and somewhat unsettled type to later and more settled forms. Though the age in its mental and literary excellence expressed in one sense the maximum of maturity, the well-developed

manhood of the nation, in another sense the English people were as yet but in the freshness and buoyancy of youth, and thus in fullest sympathy with that spirit of romance so germane to the earlier years of national life and letters. No student can rightly read the literature of the sixteenth century save as he bears this cardinal fact in mind, that he is dealing with a period that expresses, in one and the same literary product, the marks of maturity and immaturity, of fact and fancy, of history and poetry, of legend and myth, as also of science, philosophy, and didactic verse. Indeed, it is just here that we find one of the peculiar charms of this particular period, not found, to any such extent, in any later era, as the Augustan or Georgian, in each of which more stable and practical social conditions tend to make the literature more and more realistic. The Elizabethan Age is the Golden Age of Romance as well as of Reality, and of these in organic and national union, so that we are saved from both extremes — that of the merely prosaic and the merely poetic. Despite all the substantial literary productions of the century, such as Bacon's "Advancement of Learning," Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity," or Shakespeare's Historical Plays, — productions, indeed, on which the later

superstructure of our literature mainly rests, — we cannot escape the conviction that we are here in a kind of fairy-land, where our imagination may have fullest play, and, yet, without danger of passing out beyond the credible and sensible.

A study of the special *evidences* and *effects* of this Romantic feature will be found to be of interest. These evidences are mainly found in what we may call the Reproduction of the Medievalism, the transference, in varied literary forms, of the legendary element of the centuries just succeeding the Conquest to the sixteenth century of English history. In prose and verse alike, — in epic and play and ballad and story, — in philosophy and history, and, even, in translations and criticisms and extended theological discussion, this love of the new and the striking is seen, and an added attractiveness thereby given to them all. It was a time when the dramatists, as Shakespeare and his able contemporaries, were seeking, by every legitimate device, to set forth old truths in their original and most impressive and picturesque forms. Nor was this ideal confined to the dramatists. Bacon, as a philosopher, was desirous of propounding a new method of intellectual inquiry, both in physical and metaphysical spheres; and the “*Novum Orga-*

num" appeared. The epic and lyric poets sought to give to the new world of England a graphic picture of the old, so as to make it a new world to them. Travelers and historians were not content to hold themselves to the strict details of the historic record, but gave their historic imaginations free scope in the statement and explanation of national events. In fine, Elizabethan literature, as a unified product, is itself the clearest evidence of Romanticism in external form, of the real chivalric spirit in authors and authorship. If we seek for concrete examples of the presence of this element, it will not be difficult to cite works and writers who signally evince it. We see it in Spenser's "Faerie Queene," as an allegory of human life and destiny; in Lyly's "Euphues and his England," where ethical truths are delineated in imaginative form; in Sidney's "Arcadia," so replete with legend and fancy; in Raleigh's "History of the World," so marked by the speculative element as to make it an historical romance; in Bacon's "New Atlantis," which Rawley, his biographer, rightly calls "a fable"; in Sackville's "Mirror of Magistrates," in which a portion of Dante's significant imagery is used to set forth the misfortunes of some of England's illustrious men; and even in

Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy," wherein the most serious discussions are so presented through the medium "of quaint and curious lore" that the volume might well be called, *The Anatomy of Absurdity*,—a serio-comic survey of human nature and life. The *Metrical Chronicles* of the age afford an illustration of this imaginative spirit scarcely second to the poetry. In Hakluyt's "Voyages" and Purchas's "Pilgrims," in Stow's "Annals of England" and Camden's "Britannia," in Smith's "General History of Virginia," and in Froissart, Fabyan, Hall, and Holinshed, the poetic element is so mingled with the prose, the pictorial with the didactic, as to lend to the annals something of the picturesqueness of romance, and to lead the reader to forget that he is in the province of history proper. The era was full of myth and marvel; of folk-lore and fairy-tales; of pageants and revels and attractive traditions. It was a veritable Paradise of Dainty Devices. Travelers from Europe and the East swelled the sum-total of this record of adventure, and thus did, in Elizabeth's time, what Sir John Mandeville did for the fourteenth century. What was not seen was imagined. No story of travel was left untold simply by want of date and fact to substantiate it. The result, of

course, was a semi-mythical body of literature, made up of a combination of English and Continental traditions, so that, as we read, we are reminded of William of Malmesbury; of Geoffrey of Monmouth; of Layamon, and of Robert of Gloucester; of Lydgate and Malory; of the "*Chanson de Roland*," of the "*Roman de la Rose*" and "*Amadis de Gaul*"; of Ariosto and Tasso and Ronsard and Cervantes, — in fine, of all preceding books and authors, where fact and fancy contend for supremacy, and where, at the end, fancy controls. Frobisher and Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh were, in these respects, the authorities of the day. As later in the history of our letters, at the opening of what is distinctively called the Romantic Era, so now, Old English ballads and songs were revived, and the days of the Scottish Border Minstrelsy were anticipated by a century. Indeed, the Elizabethan Age, thus interpreted, is our first Romantic Era, so pronounced and typical, that when Fox wrote his "*Martyrology*" he evinced it; when Sidney and Webbe and Puttenham wrote on the *Art of Verse* they evinced it. In fact, the "*judicious*" Hooker, who was contending against the stout opposition of the Reformers for the maintenance of the Anglican ecclesiastical polity, was

almost the only author of note whose writings are devoid of this semi-historical element. It need not be said that poetry, and especially the drama, was suffused with this imaginative quality. It is seen in Shakespeare not only in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Much Ado about Nothing," "All's Well that Ends Well," and "The Winter's Tale," but in such dramas as "The Tempest" and "Macbeth," and even in the historical plays, such as "Henry the Eighth." As has been said by Moulton, "Romances are the raw material out of which the Shakespearean drama is manufactured." It is known as the "Romantic Drama, one of its chief distinctions being that it uses the stories of Romance, together with histories treated as story-books, as the sources from which the matter of the Plays is taken." The dramatization of the stories constituted one of the expressions of Shakespeare's genius. So, among his contemporaries we find a similar pictorial type. "Spenser," says Mr. Brooke, "reflected in his poems the romantic spirit of the English Renaissance," to which we may add, that sixteenth-century verse as a whole reflected it.

If we accept Brooke's fourfold division of Later Elizabethan Verse, — "that of Love, Patriotism, Reflection, and Struggle," — this symbolic

feature appears in each. The age of the Revival of Learning was, also, an age of the Revival of Myth and Legend. The Reformation of the sixteenth century was far more than a Protestant reaction against Roman Catholicism. It was, also, a reinvestment of much that was old with new life and more attractive form, a poetizing, in a sense, the entire content of contemporary literature. One signal reason why the drama was so prominent in this age is found in the fact that it, above all other forms of verse, was able to combine the medieval and the modern, the classical and the native, the romantic and the realistic, in such wise that the literary product was seen to be unique and complete. No form of prose could do it, nor could the epic with its narrative groundwork do it so successfully. The drama only could do it, while within the province of the drama itself, it was reserved for the genius of Shakespeare to effect the fusion so completely as to establish his dramatic rank as supreme, so that the most acute dramatic critic cannot yet distinguish the romantic from the real in Shakespearean art. The union is indissoluble. One of the most interesting expressions of this Romanticism is seen in the new impulse that it gave to the production of Lyric Verse, if,

indeed, it did not directly induce it, as one of the characteristic forms of modern poetry. Mr. Symonds, in his "Essays, Speculative and Suggestive," writes of the Elizabethan period, "After the drama and closely associated with it came those songs for music in which the English of the sixteenth century excelled." He speaks of them as "a copious and splendid lyric," and contends that the later lyricists of Georgian and Victorian days, though naturally surpassing their predecessors, were not unwilling to acknowledge their indebtedness to these earlier idyllists. The spirit of the time was favorable to such an order of verse. It was, by way of emphasis, the age of life and sentiment, when thought and feeling and varied activity were inseparably blended, the Golden Age of man and human hopes. No age before or since has been more signally marked by spontaneity—mental and literary, personal and national. The era of restriction and intellectual servility had given way to a new and wider order, and the result was, as a recent critic has expressed it, "that each man wrote . . . out of himself and sang spontaneously." All this was in the direct line of lyrical expression, as the poetry of human sentiment, of imagination in life and letters. When Whittier sings of "the

spacious times of great Elizabeth," his reference is to this broadening of the bonds of thought and life, whereby the best energies of the poets were enfranchised, and a "copious lyric" naturally issued. It was an age of ideals, of impassioned activity; of ambition and aspiration and bold adventure; in a word, of romanticism, safely guarded and guided, as it was, by the more practical and stable elements of the era. Such are some of the evidences of this mythical, semi-historical trend and temper in the opening century of modern English, by reason of which what Hazlitt calls the "Literature of the Age of Elizabeth" can never entirely lose its attractiveness. As radically as our literature may change as the centuries go by, this earlier age will never lose its hold upon us by reason of this pronounced romantic element. A further question here emerges as to the effects, immediate and remote, of this specific element.

One of the first and most distinctive results of this Romantic Type and Movement appears in the new interest that was at once imparted thereby to the literature of the Elizabethan Age. The thoughtful and practical Roger Ascham was setting forth wholesome truth in the pages of his "Toxophilus" and "Schoolmaster"; Knox and Fox and Jewell

were writing on behalf of ecclesiastical and civil reform; the sedate Richard Hooker was stoutly defending the doctrine and polity of the established church; Chapman was busy in his translation of the classical authors, while Bacon was penning histories and miscellanies and systems of philosophy for the widening of the bounds of human knowledge. All this was prosaic and didactic in its type — an educational method of authorship in an age of high intellectual ability. Just here, this specifically attractive romantic element entered to infuse a new and more vivacious spirit into the developing literature, so as to make that readable and popular which in itself was only substantial and instructive. Fairy-tales and sonnets of pure sentiment now appeared in close connection with weightier authorship and, often, from one and the same author. The wits and satirists and playwrights of the period wrote tragedies and comedies under the influence of this freer and more adventurous spirit. When Spenser wrote his "View of the Present State of Ireland," though he penned it in prose, he did it so as to give it the semi-historical cast and effect. The theme itself was suggestive of the legendary and marvelous as well as of the historical, and was thus but a representa-

tive example of those multiplied topics of the time which seemed to lie, in part, at least, within the province of the mythical. Elizabethan literature for this reason, if for no other, cannot be said to be dull or devoid of the popular factor. It will always be what Matthew Arnold insists every literature should be — “interesting,” sufficiently so to awaken and hold the intelligent attention of every fair-minded reader. Though it was the age of Euphuism with its affectations and forced conceits, these exaggerations were confined to Lyly and the secondary authors; their presence in Spenser and Bacon and Jonson and Shakespeare being so exceptional as scarcely to admit of serious mention.

An additional result of this Romanticism is found in the large supply of literary material it afforded to the authors of this and subsequent eras. What we might well call the “capital stock” of English letters was thus greatly increased. From Greece and Italy, from Spain and the Orient, much of this mythical material came; and, though often in crude and ill-assorted forms, came when it was most needed. One of the tests of the classification of the authors of the day is found in the genius and lack of genius to utilize this wealth of subject-matter offered at hand. Even of Shake-

speare it has been held by the most severe criticism that his superiority to his contemporaries lay as much in the masterly manner in which he utilized such existing material as in the absolute origination of such material. To the inferior order of mind this accumulated mass of legend and story and song seemed to be but a useless collection of unconnected data, the *disjecta membra* of older literatures and civilizations. The England of the sixteenth century was a kind of national receptacle for all the floating data, authentic and unauthentic, that Europe and the East had to offer. No small amount of that literary treasure which makes up what is known as the Golden Age was thus the free-will offering of the nations and was so rich and copious a legacy as still to be of service. Writers of the Victorian Age, such as the Brownings and Morris and Tennyson, have drawn at will from these same prolific sources and the centuries are thus united. As the philosophers direct us back to Kant, so Milton and his successors bid us look back to the days of the Virgin Queen for suggestion and inspiration and attractive literary capital. Were this imaginative element to be eliminated from the prose and verse of the period, much of its charm and power would disappear. The fact

that the authorship of the Shakespearean drama is, still, in many minds an open question, lends additional romance to a century already marked by the historico-legendary feature.

A more specific result of this romantic element is found in the beginnings of English prose fiction, in romance proper, as a distinctive form of literature. It is not now in place to open the discussion as to the exact historical origin of the English novel. Suffice it to say, that the generally assigned date of its first appearance in the writings of Daniel Defoe, in the opening years of the eighteenth century, must be received with modification. Though it is, in a sense, true in the light of the most technical definition of the novel, as a product of high literary merit, it will be found that if the phrase "prose fiction" be interpreted in a larger and somewhat allowable sense, as the expression of romanticism in prose, the beginning must be found far earlier in our literary history, specifically, in Sidney's "Arcadia," of the sixteenth century. Whatever else it is or is not, it is certainly a romance. As we learn from Ben Jonson's remark to Drummond, its author intended to make it a pure English romance, with King Arthur as its hero. If, as Stigant asserts, Sidney "was the first

writer of good English prose," we have the origin of English prose and English fiction in one and the same author and book. As we have seen, the spirit of the age was friendly to fiction. Just as Spenser, instead of writing an epic, as Milton did later, wrote, in keeping with the time, a Metrical Romance, so, Sidney naturally subordinated history to legend, and did for England what Lope de Vega and Sannazaro in their "*Arcadias*" did for South-western Europe. Musidorus, Prince of Thessalea; Pyrocles, Prince of Macedon; the shepherds Clarus, Strephon, Kalander, Pamela, and Philoclea stand forth as characters as clearly as Tom Jones and Pamela, and, in their way, they play their respective parts as well. In fact, as to the origin of fiction, some have plausibly traced it to Lyly's "*Euphues and his England*," a decade in advance of the "*Arcadia*." These two productions are singularly connected, as we read from Symonds, Sidney's biographer, "It is not improbable that Lyly's '*Euphues*' suggested to Sidney the notion of writing a romance in a somewhat similar style." Even farther back than this have the critics taken us to the equally romantic days of Chaucer, in his "*Tale of Meliboeus*," or back to Malory's *Knights of the Round Table*, in 1470, and More's "*Utopia*," or

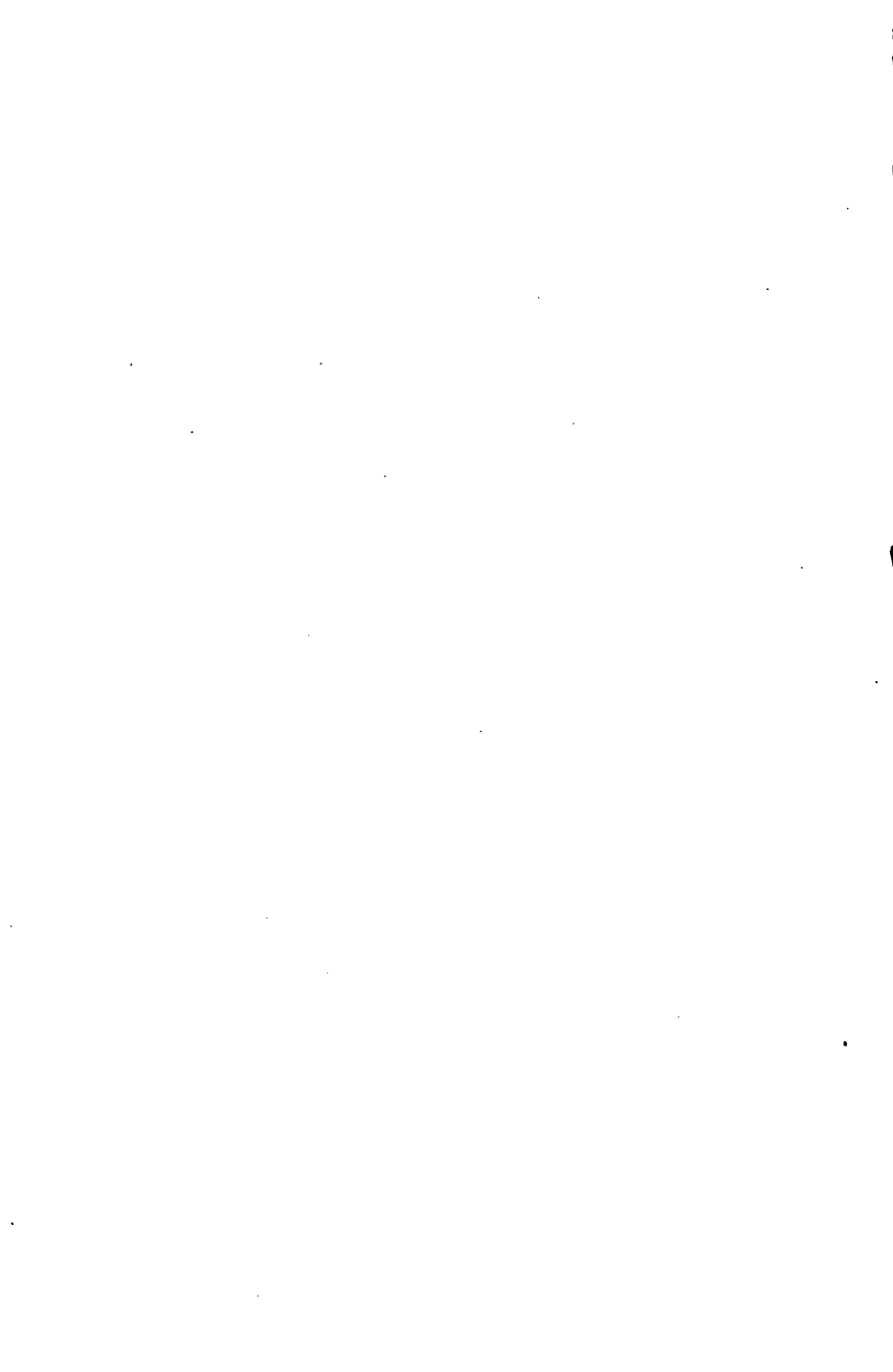
Ideal Commonwealth. However this may be, fiction appeared in concrete form and may be said to lay the basis for all subsequent efforts in that direction.

A question of special interest arises here as to the literary and logical relations of dramatic authorship and fiction, as to what each gives to the other and receives from it. Victor Hugo's "Les Misérables" and "Ninety-three" are dramas in the form of fiction, while Jonson's "Masques" and Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream" and other comedies are fiction in the form of dramas. Eliminate the fictitious or romantic element from Milton's "Comus" or the dramatic element from Cooper's "Spy" and an essential literary factor is taken from each. Bulwer's novel "Harold" and Tennyson's drama "Harold" often meet and interact, nor can the point where the tragic ends and the narrative begins be accurately discriminated by the most observing eye. Hence, the fact of interest as to the age before us is, that each alike, the drama and fiction, expresses the romantic element so germane to the time, though expressing it in different form and measure. The only wonder is, that in a period so full of the spirit of romanticism, fiction should not have obtained

a firmer footing, a partial explanation lying in the fact that it dominates prose and not verse, and that verse was the natural medium in which this half-historical feature best expressed itself. Such, in brief, may be said to be the evidences and effects of the spirit of Romance in Elizabethan letters, seen in poetry, especially, and yet in all the forms of literary product.

It would be a study of no little interest to mark the presence and trace the gradual historic development of this romantic feature in English prose and verse after the time of Elizabeth. If we have from Cowley didactic essays on agriculture and avarice, we have semi-poetic essays on what he calls "A Discourse by Way of Vision Concerning the Government of Cromwell," as, also, his picture of an ideal college, in his essay entitled "A Proposition for the Advancement of Experimental Philosophy." So, in Herrick's "Hesperides"; in Walton's "Complete Angler"; in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" and "Holy War"; in Swift's "Tale of a Tub" and "Battle of the Books." Even in philosophy it appears, as in the idealism of Berkeley; in Defoe and the later novelists; in all English folk-lore unto the days of Tennyson, one of whose poetic triumphs it was to recall the

Victorian Age to the times of King Arthur and the Round Table, and so connect the most matter-of-fact era of modern letters with the most mythical era of the past. In fact, there is in English letters but one thing more real than realism, and that is Romanticism, the innate and irrepressible tendency to give to imagery the essential force of fact, to reduce history itself to the descriptive, pictorial, and representative.



PART SECOND

SPECIAL DISCUSSIONS

I

EDMUND SPENSER AND THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

A TOPIC of this character is a striking example of the relation of literature to history, civil and ecclesiastical. In fact, so closely connected are these different provinces in the sixteenth century, that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to separate them so as to state just where either of them begins or ends, or just where civil history as distinct from ecclesiastical affects the developing literature. We speak of the historical plays of Shakespeare, and yet they are distinctively literary, just as his literary tragedies, such as "Hamlet" and "King Lear," have a decided historical element. Bacon wrote a "History of Henry the Seventh" as a literary author, as did Raleigh, "A History of the World." So did Hooker, in his "Ecclesiastical Polity," evince the close relations of the history of the English Church to Elizabethan letters, while Spenser and his school illustrated in all their verse the same affinity between

the authorship of the time and the public life of the nation. The application of this historico-literary principle as it relates to Spenser and the Reformation is full of interest, alike to the student of letters and of Christian doctrine and polity. The broader question would be, the Relation of Elizabethan Literature as a whole to the English Reformation. The narrower and yet sufficiently comprehensive question, as we have stated it, will enable us to see the religious character and beliefs of Spenser, and also to see those generic and basal principles that controlled the Reformation, and that have given it a permanent place in English literary history.

It need scarcely be stated, by way of preface, that, personally, Spenser was a Christian man and author. This is seen in all his writings, in their text and spirit, and may be said to form the controlling undertone of them all. From his "Shepherd's Calendar" to "The Faerie Queene" we find him intent on doing good, in his verse and prose. The expressed purpose of his longest poem, "to form a noble and virtuous gentleman," is the implied purpose of every other longer or shorter poem. It is thus that Lowell writes of "The Faerie Queene": "No man can read it and

be anything but the better for it. Through that rude age, when maids of honor drank beer before breakfast, and Hamlet could say a gross thing to Ophelia, he passes serenely abstracted and high, the Don Quixote of poets." In speaking of his character, Lowell further writes, "that with a purity like that of thrice-bolted snow, he had none of its coldness, and that, often 'sensuous,' as Milton would say, he was never sensual." It is noticeable, that, in so far as he had access to French and Italian sources, as Chaucer did, as in his "Amoretti" and his "Visions," he modified, even more than Chaucer, the grossness of the original, so as to deprive it of its objectionable features, and make it attractive to every high-minded reader. To speak of an expurgated Spenser, as we do of an expurgated Shakespeare or Byron, would be as strange as to be put on our guard against the full text of Milton or of Mrs. Browning.

In noting Spenser's specific attitude toward the Reformation, we may emphasize three distinct relations.

1. First of all, *his attitude toward the Classical Paganism of the time*. This paganism was expressed in the form of religious indifference or

of opposition to all Christian systems and faiths: sometimes, in the form of pronounced atheism, and always as at war with the leading principles and purposes of the Reformation. Mr. Whipple conveys a wrong impression when he speaks of "The Faerie Queene" as "socially blending Christian and pagan beliefs." These differing beliefs are, indeed, found side by side in the poem, but not "socially blended," as if the one were as tenable and praiseworthy as the other. They are brought together for the author's temporary purpose in the allegory, and rather to show by contrast the true character of each.

In speaking of the English Reformation, it must always be remembered, that it occurred just at the time when there was a decided classical, and hence a pagan, revival. We speak of the Revival of Learning, and correctly so; but it was, as we know, a revival of classical learning, of the literature and language of Greece and Rome, and with these, by necessity, a revival of the old pagan theologies and philosophies and ethical standards. The introduction of printing into England, in 1477, made it possible to render into English the pagan authors. Much of the work that Caxton did was naturally in this direction, in that the amount of

representative English literature was then comparatively small.

It was at this time, also, that the English universities were aflame with enthusiasm over the new Greek learning, and students gathered at Oxford by thousands to study Plato and kindred authors. So strong was the influence of this classical renaissance, that even English authors, such as Bacon, wrote in Latin, and the English Court became a center of Greek and Roman culture. All this was anti-reformatory, in so far as the English Reformation was concerned. It tended to revive anti-christian and unchristian beliefs; to force the language back into the service of the ancient tongues; in a word, to heathenize England.

Add to this those distinctively atheistic and degrading influences that came in from the Continent, and we are able to see what a tide of pagan teaching was flowing, against which any forces in sympathy with the Reformation must stoutly set themselves. It was this that Spenser did, as a man and an author, and as in thorough sympathy with the great religious movement of the era. No clearer proof of this can be found than the decided contrast visible between the sentiments of such paganized writers as Nash and Greene and Beau-

mont and Fletcher, and the positive Christian utterances of Spenser. In his "Complaints," such as "The Ruines of Time" and "The Ruines of Rome," this solemn protest against paganism is always clear. In "The Tears of the Muses," when lamenting the fall of Comedy, he bitterly grieves over the presence of this heathenish morality among the minor dramatists of the day, as, also, against those debasing methods that had been foisted on English scholarship by the encroachments of the antichristian literature of the Continent.

2. Spenser's *attitude toward Romanism* may also be noted. This is one of the most important questions in determining his relation to the Reformation, inasmuch as the Reformation meant, primarily, the rebuke of Romish doctrine.

It is by no means as difficult to ascertain Spenser's attitude here, as Chaucer's attitude to Wyclif and the great reforming influences of the time. It was, in fact, a movement that was just taking form and direction when Chaucer was writing, and to which he could not commit himself as readily as did Spenser in the more advanced religious thought and tendencies of the sixteenth century. Not a few critics, as Lowell, have gone so far as

to call Spenser the John Bunyan of the Elizabethan Era, as in the pages of "The Faerie Queene" he does something of that work against Romanism which Bunyan did in the days of the Commonwealth. The proofs of this opposition to Romanism are not far to find.

His life, from boyhood on, is proof in point. His ancestry was anti-Romish. His education, at the Merchant Taylors, London, was in the same direction. At Cambridge, under Whitgift, Master of Pembroke, his training was, of course, Protestant; while the fierce doctrinal disputes then waging at the university but intensified this protest against all that was papal. The wide knowledge of biblical truth that he evinces, and the keen personal interest which he took in all the religious discussions of the time go to show that his training was Protestant, and that, quite apart from outside influences, he would have been on the side of the best thinking and public policy in church and state.

The best proof of his Protestantism, however, is seen in his Works, some of which may be examined. Turning to "The Shepherd's Calendar," there are three of the twelve Eclogues that are distinctly anti-Romish,—those entitled "May," "July," and "September." In "May," in the

character of the two shepherds, Piers and Palinode, he represents two kinds of pastors, the Protestant and the Romish, respectively, his satirical allusions to the wantonness and gross neglect of their flocks on the part of the papal pastors clearly showing what views he held. Thus Piers says to Palinode, who had been praising the jollity and gayety of the shepherds:—

“The like bene shepheardes, for the devils stedde,
That playen while their flockès be unfedde:
Well is it seene theyr sheepe bene not their owne,
That letten them runne at random alone:
But they bene hyred for little pay
Of other, that caren as little as they,
What fallen the flocke, so they han the fleece,
And get all the gayne. . . .”

It is in this Eclogue that he directly charges upon the Pope and prelates tyranny over the bodies and souls of men, and under the name of religion; also, the neglect of their duty and the opening of the gates for the incoming of worldliness and lust,—a theme of which Spenser never tires.

In “July,” the theme is practically the same—the praise of good shepherds, in the person of Thomalin, and the blame of evil shepherds, in the person of Morrell. Thus sings Thomalin in one of the most characteristic passages:—

"O blessed Sheepe! O Shepheard great!
That bought his flocke so deare,
And them did save with bloody sweat
From wolves that would them teare. . . .
But shepheard mought be meeke and mylde,
Well-eyed, as Argus was,
With fleshly follyes undefyled,
And stoute as steede of brasse."

As he goes on to speak of the base shepherds, no one can doubt the plainness of the reference:—

"They bene yclad in purple and pall,
So hath theyr God them blist;
They reigne and rulén over all,
And lord it as they list. . . .
For Pallnode (if thou him ken)
Yode [went] late on pilgrimage
To Rome (if such be Rome), and then
He sawe the like misusage;
For shepheardes (sayd he) there doén leade,
As lordés done other where;
Theyr sheepe han crusts, and they the bread,
The chippes, and they the chere [favor]."

In "September," he continues the strain, calling special attention to the loose character and living of the prelates. In this Eclogue, both characters, Diggon Davie and Hobbinoll, deplore the sins of the shepherds:—

"Then, playnely to speak of shepheards most white,
Badde is the best (this English is flatt)."

In these and similar outbursts of mingled satire and pleasantry, we have the Langland of the sixteenth century, protesting with might and main against the corruptions of the time, and especially against the sins of the Romish priests.

In one of the nine poems called "Complaints," he presents the same line of satire, in the character of the Priest, as he says:—

"All his caire was, his service well to say,
And to read Homelies upon Holldayes;
When that was done, he might attend his playes."

He encourages two of the personages, under the guise of the Fox and the Ape, to aspire to the priesthood or some similar office in the church, in that they could live therein by their wits, as he says to them, by way of showing how light the service was:—

"Now once a weeke, upon the Sabbath day,
It is enough to doo our small devotion,
And then to follow any merrie notion.
Nor are we byde to fast, but when we list,
Nor to were garments base, of wollen twist,
But with the finest silkes us to aray,
That before God we may appeare more gay.
We be not tyde to wilful chastitie,
But have the gospel of free libertie."

Hence, we read, very naturally, and in well-known Spenserian satire:—

"By that he ended had his ghostly sermon,
The Fox was well induced to be a Parson;
And of the Priest eftsoones began to inquire
How to a Benefice he might aspire."

In answer to this, he is initiated into the crafty devices of office-seeking in the church. In those of the "Complaints" entitled "The Visions of Bellay" and "The Visions of Petrarch," it is quite noteworthy that the Flemish author, Van der Noodt, to whom Spenser was partially indebted in these "Visions," writes, that he was a religious refugee from Brabant to England, "as well," he says, "for that I would not beholde the abominations of the Romysche Antichrist as to escape the handes of the bludthirsty." This is one of those incidental and yet forcible testimonies to the Protestantism of Spenser which the careful reader will find throughout his verse; no good opportunity being lost by the poet to express his indignation against the Romish abuses of the time, and especially to satirize those priests who made a mock of their duties.

In "The Faerie Queene," the evidence is equally clear. This may best be shown by citing, in order, passages from the poem. An examination of Book First may be said to fairly represent the

entire romance. We notice, at the outset, the meaning of the personal symbolism used — the characters of the epic.

In canto i., in the Red Cross Knight, the reference is to Saint George, the patron saint of England, as distinct from Rome. The Dragon referred to, while primarily designating Satan, as mentioned in Rev. xii. 9, also designates Rome and Spain as two great papal powers in Southern Europe. The "aged sire" refers to Archimago, the synonym of Hypocrisy, or the Romish Church; it being probable that personal allusion is made to one of the popes who had issued edicts against Elizabeth as a Protestant queen, possibly to Sixtus the Fifth, chosen in 1585 to the papal throne. Possibly the allusion may be to Philip the Second, of Spain, the sworn foe of the reformed movement. In this same canto, Spenser makes ironical reference to the apparently sinless life of the Romish hermits, only to teach us, that, beneath this fair exterior, there lurked the evil principles of jesuitical deceit and diplomacy. Una, the true church, is contrasted with Duessa, the apostate church, representing Falsehood; the name Una, oneness, possibly suggesting Duessa, or duplicity.

In canto ii., Archimago, in the disguise of Saint

George, symbolizes the claims made by the papacy that the Pope was England's patron saint, and that England was in spiritual subjection to Rome. No one can doubt the reference to Duessa in the lines,

"A goodly Lady clad in scarlet red,
Profled with gold and pearls of rich assay."

Here the poet identifies Duessa, or the Romish Church, with the Woman of Babylon (Rev. xiii. 4), a more specific allusion identifying her with Mary Queen of Scots. The gold and pearls and "tinsel trappings" refer to the offerings made by the devotees of the Pope to the church by way of penance and service, the poet also teaching that popery and paganism are not essentially distinct. In this same canto, a close distinction is drawn between the true church or Holy Catholic Church and the Church of Rome, as the property of the Pope. He shows the peril to which the Reformed Church would have been exposed had Mary Queen of Scots gained the throne.

Passing to canto iii., we note a reference to Corceca, "the mother blynd," or religious superstition, in which we recall the current Romish statement, "Ignorance is the mother of devotion." There is also allusion to the manner in which

Henry the Eighth in 1535 sent out a commission to inspect the abbeys and monasteries, and a reference to the unintelligent worship of the dupes of Rome:—

“Nine hundred *Pater nosters* every day,
And thrice nine hundred *Aves*, she was wont to say.”

At this point, it is of interest to note that this vain and ignorant worship is dwelt upon at length and with unmixed severity in Spenser's only prose work, his “View of the Present State of Ireland,” in which we read: “Therefore,” says Eudexus, one of the two speakers, “the fault which I find in Religion is but one . . . that they are all Papists by their profession, but in the same so blindly and brutishly enformed as that you would rather think them atheists or infidels, for not one amongst a hundred knoweth any ground of religion or any article of his faith, but can perhaps say his *Pater Noster* or his *Ave Maria* without any knowledge or understanding what one word thereof meaneth.” Referring to Popes Celestius and Patrick he continues: “In which Popes' time, and long before, it is certain that religion was generally corrupted with their popish trumpery, therefore what other could the priests learn than such trash as was taught them and drink of that cup of for-

nication with which the purple harlot had then made all nations drunken."

In canto iv., the reference to Lucifer, or Pride, and the "six wizards" is to the Seven Deadly Sins of the Romish Calendar. In canto vii., in depicting the Beast or Dragon, that is, the Papacy, his "yron brest" symbolizes the cruelty of the church; his "back of scaly brass," her insensibility to counsel, and his eyes "imbrewed with blood," the horrors of the Inquisition and Saint Bartholomew. A similar reference to Saint Bartholomew's Day is found in canto viii.:—

"And after him the proud Duessa came,
High mounted on her many-headed Beast,
And every head with fiery tongue did flame,
And every head was crownèd in his crest,
And bloody mouthèd with late cruel feast."

He shows that the Romish system is based on temporal and spiritual tyranny, which being removed, the whole system totters and falls.

In canto x., reference is made to the papal tenets of Confession and Absolution and Penance and Indulgences against which Luther had fought.

In the last canto, allusion is made to the various attempts to Romanize the English Church, especially by Pius the Fourth, who invited Elizabeth to send delegates to the Council of Trent; to

Pius the Fifth, who sought to reconcile Elizabeth before excommunicating her; and to Philip the Second, who, with the same intent, sought the queen in marriage. Thus, from first to last, in this opening book, Spenser's decided anti-papal character appears; so much so, that he may be said, indeed, to have been in his own way one of the Elizabethan Reformers.

In this respect, Book First is but a sample of the other five books, in each of which the poet keeps his eye on the papacy, and has nothing to say on her behalf, save that she did an important work in the Middle Ages, and, later on, in the province of the fine arts. Percival and other critics have spoken of Spenser's "intolerant point of view" whenever he discussed the relation of Romanism to the Reformed Faith and Church; while the fact is that he could have taken no other point of view in an age such as that in which he lived. He was, indeed, intolerant, if by that is meant that he had no sympathy with Rome, and left unimproved no occasion to evince it. If by "intolerant" is meant that his opposition was expressed in a bitter and bigoted spirit, then objection must be taken; his so-called "intolerance" being nothing more than that uncompromising spirit which Lu-

ther evinced in Germany, Knox in Scotland, and Latimer in England. Reference has been made to possible resemblances between Spenser and Bunyan. One of them is just here, in the unyielding abhorrence which each of them had of the papacy, and their conception of it as the child of the devil.

3. A further question of interest arises in determining Spenser's relation to the Reformation. It pertains to his *attitude*, inside the sphere of Protestantism, *toward the Calvinism and Puritanism* of the time *as distinct from Anglicanism*. It must not be forgotten that we are now dealing with a period marked by the revival not only of classical learning, but, more especially, of that of the Schoolmen, made up, as it was, of theologies and philosophies, whose chief aim was to discuss and settle the perplexing doctrinal questions of the time. This scholastic method of theologizing and passionate love for it was a good part of the legacy which the Schoolmen bequeathed to the England of Elizabeth. Hence, it is clear that Spenser's middle life and best literary work were contemporaneous with this great historic and controversial movement, so that it would have been difficult for him not to have taken a part, and defined his position on all pending questions. In

no one sphere did this doctrinal dispute take on a more determined form than as to the relation of Anglicanism to the other Protestant theologies and ecclesiastical systems of the age, Calvinistic and Puritan. The battle now was not between Christianity and Paganism, nor between Protestantism and the Papacy, but between the Church of England and the Dissenters, between Canterbury and Geneva. Richard Hooker, the first and ablest Anglican polemic writer of the day, made it the aim of his "Polity" to show that the teachings and order of the established church were of divine authority, and, hence, binding on all the loyal citizens of England, in opposition to that faith and polity which was defended fully as strenuously by Travers and Cartwright and the Calvinistic school. The fact is, that Hooker, as a man and an author, stood at the very head of this movement, and it is through the study of his life and work that we obtain the best results as to what the movement was and did. In the Temple of which he had been appointed the Master, Hooker defended Anglicanism in the morning; and Travers, Calvinistic Puritanism in the afternoon, while around one or the other as a leader the Protestants of England gathered. Toward this

increased agitation in the Protestant Church, Spenser assumed a rational and moderate position, midway between the extremes of a bigoted Puritanism and an equally bigoted Anglicanism. Thus Lowell ventures the assertion that in "The Shepherd's Calendar" the poet was a Puritan, and so by conviction. While quoting the passage from "The Faerie Queene" supposed to satirize the Puritan narrowness,

"Like that ungracious crew which feigns demurest
grace,"

he insists that "with the more generous side of Puritanism" Spenser "sympathized to the last."

To the same effect, Church contends, "that he certainly had the Puritan hatred of Rome," and adds, that he exhibited a form of faith that might well be called "a mitigated Puritanism." This is not to say, however, that Spenser was a Puritan — as Milton and Baxter were Puritans. He never classed himself among the dissenters from the established church. He never saw his way clear to leave its inclosure and openly oppose it. This, however, is to be noted, that he favored a modified Anglicanism. He objected to the papal tendencies of the prelacy, insisting that an unduly elaborate ceremonial would in the end react on

the usefulness and very existence of the organization.

In a similar manner, he objected to that form of doctrine current under the name of Calvinism, because of its supposed bigotry and intolerance. When a student at Pembroke College, he was a witness of the fierce disputes between Calvinist and churchman. Whitgift was contending for the Established Order, while Cartwright was actually teaching at Cambridge the theology of Geneva.

To these discussions, Spenser as a student was accustomed and, as a result, must thus early have taken sides against the exclusive teachings of Cartwright. Thus we read from Church: "For the stern austerities of Calvinism, its isolation from human history and all the manifold play and variety of human character, there could not be much sympathy in a man like Spenser," as we know there was not with any system that interfered, as he thought, with the full development of human life and personality. In fine, if he must choose, as he did, between an intolerant Anglicanism and an intolerant Puritanism and Calvinism, he preferred the former, and, with that preference, used his utmost efforts to soften its asperities and widen its separation from the Church of Rome.

It is thus that Spenser was true to the best traditions of the English Church, and yet viewed with a generous eye all other forms of Protestantism that existed. In this respect, he was a true reformer, working for the highest interests of truth as truth. To this extent, at least, Spenser the poet was the superior of Hooker the controversialist, in that he more liberally admitted the claims of opposing systems as well as the faults of his own, and sought by a proper measure of concession to emphasize the best that there was in each. Spenser's attitude, then, toward the Reformation is clear. Out and out opposed to the pagan teachings that were so current as the result of the classical revival, and even more bitterly opposed to the faith of the Romish Church, he was a loyal Anglican, with the independence of his own convictions, ready always to acknowledge every wholesome element in different Protestant systems, but never willing to lend his name or pen to any kind of bigotry, whether that took the form of Papacy, Prelacy, Presbyterianism, or Puritanism. He was, in fact, a prominent example of the tolerant Christian and churchman, and that in an age when Christian tolerance was a special grace.



It would be an interesting study to run through

the list of Elizabethan authors to note just what their attitude was toward the Reformation—in what respect indifferent or hostile, as in the case of the minor playwrights; in what respect reserved, as in the case of Shakespeare and Bacon; and when pronounced and aggressive, as with Hooker and Spenser; there being no one who did more efficient work than Spenser along the lines of the Reformation.

Nor is it to be forgotten, that whatever were the differences of belief and worship among the Protestant orders of the time, all were united in the one great effort to uproot the power of Rome. To this extent, Spenser and the best authors were reformers, as much so as were Fox and Knox. The Reformation was English as against Romish; a revolt in the sixteenth century against the traditional dogmas of the Middle Ages, and, as such, claimed the sympathies of every loyal Englishman. It is one of the anomalies of literary history that so pronounced a Protestant as Spenser should have been obliged to spend some of the best years of his life in a Roman Catholic country, and to have written his greatest poem on Romish soil, as an English exile on Irish ground.

The very names of his children, Sylvanus and

Peregrine, intimate that he felt himself to be a kind of an alien. In all this, however, the heroic figure of the Red Cross Knight was kept in view, as was that of Una, the true church, the Holy Catholic Church of the apostles and the faithful of all time. If, in this respect, a comparison be made between Chaucer and Spenser, the result is largely in favor of the later poet. "The Canterbury Tales" held no such relation to the earlier Reformation of the fourteenth century as does "The Faerie Queene" to the later.

One of the interesting reflections that arise in connection with the six lost or unfinished books of "The Faerie Queene" is found in the question as to just how the poet would have further indicated in them his personal position as to the great religious movements and topics of the time, whether he would have revealed weaker or stronger preferences for Puritanism, and just how he would have represented this reformation of the church as involving that of the state and of English authorship.

Be this as it may, as Wyclif and Caxton were reformers before the Reformation, Spenser was a reformer at the Reformation, and, next to the clergy and religious writers of the time, did a

work second to no other toward the advancement of English Protestantism and Christian truth. In all this, we have decided proof still of the substantial sympathy of our best English authors with the best interests of evangelical religion.

II

SPENSER AND LATER ENGLISH SONNETEERS

VERY naturally Shakespeare does not stand alone as a sonneteer in the Elizabethan Era.

In common with all forms of literature in prose and verse, the sonnet partook of the general literary awakening that marked the opening of the sixteenth century. Saintsbury, in his recent discussion of Elizabethan literature, speaks of "the extraordinary outburst of sonnet writing" at the time, so notable that, before the close of Elizabeth's reign, in 1603, more than "a dozen collections, chiefly or wholly of sonnets," appeared, represented by such authors as Lodge, Fletcher, Daniel, Constable, Watson, Drayton, and, especially, Sidney, quite apart from the more distinctive product of Shakespeare and Spenser. To these minor authors of the era, this special poetic form seemed particularly to appeal, partly because of its structural brevity, and, also, by reason of its pronounced idyllic quality, admitting of the expression of emotion throughout the wide range of human feeling and fancy. That the "fashion changed" as the

century closed is suggestively attributed to the overshadowing excellence of Shakespeare and Spenser.

SPENSER

The great epic poet of the time, Edmund Spenser, contributed either originally or as a translator what might be called several collections or series of sonnets. One of these series is "The Ruines of Rome," the product of Bellay, one of the seven compeers under Henry the Second. In the first stanza, which is an invocation, the poet asks the aid of those spirits who of old peopled Rome and added to its fame. As the poem develops, he pictures the city in ruins, repeats the lamentation of her great names over her downfall and the boasts of her conquerors. Though in ruins, he depicts her as still beautiful, recalls her greatness, feared even by the gods, proclaims her to be without a rival, and calls on the spirits of the Thracian bards and of Vergil himself to aid him in his praise. He dwells with sadness on the causes of her downfall, in ambition, pride, wealth and luxury, civil and foreign wars, and social corruption. Each of the thirty-two stanzas is a poem in itself, as rich in æsthetic beauty as it is in eth-

ical teaching, Spenser adding an envoy to the original, as a formal tribute to Bellay. It is a kind of an abridged poetic study of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, as Gibbon viewed it, and marked by suggestive comments on political philosophy and life. The structure of the stanzas is that of three regular quatrains and a couplet. Another Spenserian series of the sonnet order is that entitled "The Visions of Bellay," made up of fifteen stanzas, in which the Italian poet is back again among Roman ruins and by a succession of visions depicts the instability of all things human. "The Visions of Petrarch," made up of seven stanzas, and "The Visions of the World's Vanitie," with twelve stanzas, complete a cycle or a trilogy of visions, in the sonnet structure, all included in a larger series of nine poems under the caption of "Complaints." It is interesting to note that an early version of Bellay's "Visions" is found in "The Theatre for Worldlings," a book by John van der Noodt, a refugee from Brabant to England, to escape Romish persecution.

The sonnets proper, however, from the pen of Spenser are the eighty-eight entitled "Amoretti," written as a tribute to Elizabeth Boyer, whom he married in 1594. As the Italian title indicates,

they are little love-lyrics, and follow the prevailing Spenserian structure, as seen in the "Visions," and are marked by that peculiar poetic quality that characterizes all the work of Spenser in verse. Some of these — such as the fifteenth, eighteenth, twenty-second, thirty-fourth, and sixty-eighth — are exceptionally excellent. This last one well exhibits the author at his best:—

"Most glorious Lord of life, that on this day
Didst make thy triumph over death and sin,
And, having harrowed hell, didst bring away
Captivity thence captive, us to win:
This joyous day, dear Lord, with joy begin;
And grant that we, for whom thou didest die,
Being with thy dear blood clean washt from sin,
May live forever in felicity!
And that thy love, we weighing worthily,
May likewise love thee for the same again;
And for thy sake, that all like dear did'st buy,
With love may one another entertain!
So let us love, dear Love, like as we ought:
Love is the lesson which the Lord us taught."

In fact, the sonnets of Spenser sustain somewhat the same relation to "The Faerie Queene" and his other poems which the sonnets of Shakespeare sustain to his plays; so that, though inferior to his epic as Shakespeare's to his dramas, they cannot be said to be unworthy of their author or in any substantive way to impair his poetic re-

pute. As the two greatest poets of the Elizabethan Age they thus fittingly represent the three great divisions of poetry, the epic, dramatic, and lyric, and auspiciously open the record of Modern English verse.

MILTON

In the collection of Milton's poems, we find eighteen sonnets, the authorship of no one of them being in doubt, sustaining somewhat the same relation to his epics as the "shorter poems," so-called, sustain to them; especially, such as the poems "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," "Upon the Circumcision," "The Passion," and "Arcadia." What are called his "songs," such as "Song.—On May Morning," are such in substance though not in form, as are the poems "On Time" and "At a Solemn Music." The famous "Epitaph on Shakespeare," though not exactly corresponding to the laws of sonnet structure, is the nearest approximation to it and has the force of such a lyric. It is in reality a sixteen-line stanza, made up of eight regular couplets. His poem "On the University Carrier," Hobson, is made up of nine such couplets. His first sonnet was written in 1631, and is entitled "On his being arrived to the Age of Twenty-three," as it opens:—

"How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!"

ending with the oft-quoted couplet,

"All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-master's eyes."

Other sonnets follow of varying value, those pertaining to political struggles, such as the third, sixth, seventh, twelfth, and thirteenth, and those referring to his blindness, the fifteenth and seventeenth, being especially significant. From these eighteen sonnets, few though they are, we may cull some of the most current passages that Milton has penned. Thus in the sixth we note the line,

"That would have made Quintillian stare and gasp."

In the seventh, we read:—

"License they mean when they cry liberty."

So, in the twelfth, are the familiar lines,

"Till truth and right from violence be freed,
And public faith cleared from the shameful brand
Of public fraud."

So, in the thirteenth,

"Peace hath her victories
No less renowned than War."

In the fifteenth,

"They also serve who only stand and wait."

In the seventeenth, writing of his blindness, he says:—

"Yet I argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate one jot
Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask?
The conscience, friend, to have lost them overplied
In liberty's defence, my noble task,
Of which all Europe rings from side to side."

In an exceptional stanza of twenty lines, published among the sonnets as if a part of them, entitled "New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament," is the well-known line,

"New Presbyter is but old Priest writ large."

Of the eighteen sonnets, the fourth, fifth, eleventh, fourteenth, and fifteenth are somewhat irregular as to structure. As to the poetic merit of the sonnets, there has been but one opinion, and that fully sustaining the author's general reputation as a writer of verse.

"The effectiveness of Milton's sonnets," writes Pattison, "is chiefly due to the real nature of the character, person, or incident of which each is the delineation. Each person, thing, or fact is a moment in Milton's life in which he was stirred."

The short and condensed form of this verse seemed admirably suited to the expression of Milton's terse and vigorous sentiments on matters affecting the commonwealth, and in such personal tributes as those to Skinner, Cromwell, Fairfax, and Sir Henry Vane. Few contrasts in English literature are more marked than that which is presented in the Milton of "Paradise Lost" and "Samson Agonistes," on the one hand, and the Milton of "L'Allegro" and "Comus" and the Sonnets, on the other. The most suggestive example of such a contrast is furnished by Milton himself as a writer of verse and a writer of prose.

WORDSWORTH

In the troublous times between the early poems of Milton and the birth of Wordsworth (1770), opening the era of naturalistic verse in England, we find but little lyric product of exceptional merit, and the sonnet "was long out of favor." A gross materialism, on the one hand, or a conventional formalism, on the other, sufficiently explains this lyric dearth. Gay's "Shepherd's Week" and Ramsay's "Gentle Shepherd," Shenstone's "Pastoral Ballad" and the Odes and Elegy of Gray, Thomson's "Seasons" and the Odes of Collins,

Beattie's "Minstrel" and Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," and Cowper's Hymns, all represented scattered specimens of idyllic excellence. Sir Walter Scott was born the following year; Burns was but a boy of twelve summers; while Byron, remembered as a sonneteer only by his famous lines on "Chillon," was still in his minority. Indeed, it was this famous trio that widened and enriched the romantic movement that was so signally to change the current and character of English verse in the direction of emotive sympathy, of a catholic spirit, and a deep devotion to the interests of the people as a whole; and yet Wordsworth was the only one of the three who in any substantive sense represents that form of the lyric included in the sonnet as a form whose "thoughtfulness suited his bent and whose limits frustrated his prolixity."

It is true that in Scott's "Lady of the Lake," "Marmion," "Lay of the Last Minstrel," and other poems, we have some stanzas of fourteen lines, but not of the traditional sonnet type nor in any consecutive order; while in the poetry of Burns, though in what he thus writes he conforms to one of the standard sonnet structures, the examples are so rare as to scarcely admit of citation. It is not a little difficult to account for the fact

that such genuine bards as Scott and Burns, so in sympathy, as they were, with all human interests and all the varied phenomena of the natural world, should not have given us extended specimens of this particular lyric order. As to Burns, especially, such a sonnet as he gives us in the one entitled "On Hearing a Thrush Sing in a Morning Walk," elicits increasing surprise that he did not give us more. Possibly, his free and easy manner and his lack of all restraint as a man or poet made it impossible for him to confine himself to any such prearranged poetic order as that furnished us in the historic sonnets of Milton and Wordsworth and the later poets. His songs seemed to need an atmosphere and area of their own to give them their fullest poetical effect.

In one of his informal conversations Wordsworth speaks of the "five and six hundred sonnets" that he had written, an estimate that can be justified only by supposing that all that he wrote are not extant, or that he used the term "sonnet" somewhat loosely as including any short lyric and not necessarily only those of the conventional structure. In his poetry, as we have it, there are somewhat over three hundred examples of the sonnet proper, divisible into classes or series:—

First, "The Ecclesiastical Sketches" include one hundred and fifteen selections. "For the convenience of passing from one point of the subject to another without shocks of abruptness," the author states, "this work has taken the shape of a series of Sonnets." In what he calls the "Advertisement" he gives us the occasion that elicited the poem. In a walk, one beautiful morning in December, 1820, with a special friend, who was selecting a site for a church on his estate, their thoughts naturally reverted to the ecclesiastical history of England, and especially to the Catholic Question, then agitating Parliament; "and it struck me," he says, "that certain points" in the history "might advantageously be presented to view in verse." He thus divides the "Sketches" into three parts: The first treats of the history, "From the Introduction of Christianity into Britain, to the Consummation of the Papal Dominion"; the second, "To the Close of the Troubles ✓ in the reign of Charles I.," and the third, "From the Restoration to the Present Times,"—"a series of sonnets," writes Myers, "which though they possess, in only a few instances, force or charm enough to rank them high as poetry, yet, assume a certain value when we consider . . . the greater

inadequacy of all rival attempts in the same direction." Some of the selections are of special historical interest alike to the student of church and state, such as the "Monastery of Old Bangor"; "Paulinus," of Northumbria; "Primitive Saxon Clergy," beginning,

"How beautiful your presence, how benign,
Servants of God! who not a thought will share
With the vain world";

"Reproof," a tribute to the historian Bede;
"Saxon Monasteries"; "Alfred" as it opens,

"Behold a pupil of the monkish gown,
The plous Alfred, King to Justice dear;
Lord of the harp and liberating spear;
Mirror of Princes";

"The Norman Conquest"; "Wickliffe," as the forerunner of the English Reformation; "Corruptions of the Higher Clergy," in which he stoutly rebukes their worldliness and love of ease, as he writes:—

"Woe to you Prelates! rioting in ease
And cumbrous wealth, . . .
.
.
.
Pastors who neither take nor point the way
To Heaven";

"The Translation of the Bible" so that

"He who guides the plough, or wields the crook,
With understanding spirit now may look
Upon her records";

"Walton's Book of Lives"; "Places of Worship," of which he beautifully sings:—

"Where a few villagers on bended knees
Find solace which a busy world disdains";

"Pastoral Character"; and "Inside of King's College Chapel, Cambridge." These are some of the varied topics of which this old Lakeside sonneteer treats, and in the elaboration of which some of the choicest elements of his personality and poetic art appear, — "not brilliant, indeed, as models of lyric verse, and yet truly Wordsworthian, and as such interesting and impressive."

A second series of sonnets, numbering thirty-three, with what is called an "After-Thought," or supplementary stanza, is entitled "To the River Duddon," a collection, the author tells us, "which was the growth of many years." To Wordsworth, as a poet of the woods and streams, this historic river "on the confines of Westmoreland, Cumberland and Lancashire," seemed to appeal with special interest, as he writes in the closing couplet of the first stanza:—

"Pure flow the verse, pure, vigorous, free, and bright,
For Duddon, long-loved Duddon, is my theme!"

Of the entire collection, the "After-Thought" is the best:—

"I thought of Thee, my partner and my guide,
As being past away, — vain sympathies!
For, backward, Duddon! as I cast my eyes,
I see what was, and is, and will abide;
Still glides the stream, and shall not cease to glide;
The form remains, the function never dies;
While we, the brave, the mighty, and the wise,
We men, who in our morn of youth defied
The elements, must vanish: — be it so!
Enough, if something from our hands have power
To live and act, and serve the future hour;
And if, as toward the silent tomb we go,
Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent
dower,
We feel that we are greater than we know."

A third series is entitled "Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty," reminding us by their title and content of the great Puritan sonneteer who preceded Wordsworth, and sounded the note of personal and national freedom so loud and long as to catch the ear of all England. In this series there are sixty-eight selections, divided into two parts or sections; one of them, the thirty-fourth, departing from the ordinary sonnet structure. It is in this series that we find some examples of special note, such as the one "To Toussaint l'Ouverture,"—

"the most unhappy man of men!"

Yet die not; do thou
Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow
Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,
Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and skies;
There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind."

In the twelfth, we have the striking couplet,

"Two voices are there; one is of the sea,
One of the mountains; each a mighty voice."

In the thirteenth, are the famous lines,

"Plain living and high thinking are no more;
The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone."

The fourteenth is one of the historic sonnets of literature, as we read the poet's tribute to his great forerunner,

"Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee."

So, in the sixteenth, the equally famous lines,

"We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spoke; the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held."

In the ninth stanza, Part Second, we have a stir-

ring sonnet to the Tyrolese hero, "Höffer," as in the eleventh an appeal to the loyalty of the Tyrolese:—

"The land we from our fathers had in trust,
And to our children will transmit, or die:
This is our maxim, this our piety;
And God and Nature say that it is just."

Nowhere else does Wordsworth sound a truer note than in these utterances on behalf of political liberty and the rights of man, and nowhere have his poetic sentiments a more distinctively Miltonic movement, so that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are thus conjoined in their impassioned plea for common justice.

A fourth series is made up of "Miscellaneous Sonnets," Parts First and Second, ninety-seven in all; some of the examples being especially impressive. It is quite noticeable that in each of the parts there is a sonnet in defense of this particular type of lyric, the second selection of Part First beginning

"Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room";
and the opening stanza of Part Second,

"Scorn not the sonnet."

Some of the most noteworthy in Part First are

the following: the fourteenth and fifteenth, "To Sleep," opening so beautifully,

"A flock of sheep that lelsurely pass by,
One after one; the sound of rain, and bees
Murmuring; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,
Smooth fields, white sheets of water, and pure sky;
By turns have all been thought of, yet I lie
Sleepless";

the twenty-fourth, "The Decay of Piety"; the thirty-second, with its exquisite lines

"It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
The holy time is quiet as a Nun
Breathless with adoration";

the thirty-fifth, so often quoted,

"The world is so much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers."

In Part Second, the eleventh opens,

"There is a pleasure in poetic pains
Which only poets know";

and the twenty-sixth, in which the poet represents himself as standing on Westminster Bridge in the early morning just before the great city is waking into life,

"Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty."

A collection known as "Memorials of a Tour

on the Continent" contains, among other forms of lyrics, seventeen examples of sonnets, that might be included under the miscellaneous order, in which the poet makes reference to such Continental places and scenes as Calais, Bruges, Waterloo, Liège, Cologne, the Rhine, the Danube, Lauterbrunnen, St. Gothard, Milan, Aix-la-Chapelle, Chamouni, Boulogne, and Dover, the less distinctive merit of these selections, as compared with the others cited, strikingly revealing the fact that the poet was more at home and more the master of his art when among the hills and vales of his native England. The valley of Grasmere was far more to him than the valley of Dover or Chamouni, and Derwentwater than Lake Como and Brienz.

A single sonnet, the fourteenth in the series, entitled "Epitaphs and Elegiac Poems," may be said to complete the more than three hundred sonnets represented in the several series we have studied, a content and range and quality, despite all defects and limitations, that justly entitle the author to a place in the first list of English sonneteers where Shakespeare and Spenser and Milton had already set the form and established the record.

SOME LATER SONNETEERS

As the history of our literature develops from the days of Wordsworth to the time of Victoria and throughout her illustrious reign, it is a significant fact, and yet in the line of normal poetic process, that we have from nearly every leading English poet from Coleridge to Swinburne some examples of the sonnet stanza, expressed in varying forms of rhyme and with varying degrees of excellence. Lyric verse in general assumed commanding prominence at the opening of the Romantic Era, and in the later literature the sonnet shared in this poetic revival, as being fully in keeping with what Courthope has called the "Liberal Movement in English Literature," which was primarily a poetic and lyrical movement. A brief study of some of the leading names of this list will be full of interest.

The first that suggests itself is that of Keats, author of but a few sonnets, twenty-four in all, and yet of substantive merit along this line of lyric, and characterized by that same exquisite classical taste that marks his "Eve of St. Agnes" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn." He was a kind of transitional sonneteer between the earlier and later

nyson begat all the rest," words of eulogy which, applicable alike to the sonnets and all his verse, indicate not so much any large amount of poetic product or any epic and dramatic gift, but that "new note" which he struck in the poetry of his time and the fresh inspiration that he gave to his generation just when it was most needed. The ten or twelve sonnets of Coleridge, whose literary repute lay in prose and other forms of verse; Shelley's sonnet "To Wordsworth," which makes us regret that he confined his lyric product of this order to a half-dozen examples; and Moore's ~~Songs and Melodies~~, which have endeared him to every lover of verse, though lying outside the sonnet circle, need not detain us in the poetic survey now in hand. Even Tennyson, the acknowledged poetic master of his age, so seldom essayed this structure that it scarcely enters into the examination of his work; while Robert Browning's *Lyrics and Idylls* were, as he termed them, "Dramatic," and expressed in the unrestricted varieties outside of the traditional fourteen lines of the sonnet.

The sonnets of Matthew Arnold, twenty-five in number, deserve more than a passing comment: such as, "Quiet Work," "Youth's Agitations," with its suggestive close,

"And sigh that one thing only has been lent
To youth and age in common — discontent,"

"Worldly Place," "The Better Part," "Immortality," and "Shakespeare," scarcely surpassed in English verse,

"Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask — Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge,"—

poems in which this serious-minded author seeks to solve, as in all he wrote, the complex problem of human life, — a problem that agitated and evaded him down to the day of his death. Clough, the author of some fifteen sonnets, is naturally suggested when writing of Matthew Arnold, in that his soul was stirred and distressed by the same unavailing discussion of the problem of life; a poet, who, according to Lowell, "will be thought a hundred years hence, to have been the truest expression in verse of the doubt and struggle toward settled convictions of the period in which he lived." The very captions of his sonnets indicate this feverish unrest of spirit, as the series entitled "Blank Misgivings," and "On the Thought of Death." Even his sonnet "All Is Well" is a despondent outburst on the mystery of being, as indicated in its closing couplet,

"The wind it blows, the ship it goes,
Though where and whither no one knows."

He is the Omar Khayyam of Modern English verse.

In Dante Gabriel Rossetti we have a representative sonnet-writer, worthily continuing the lyric succession already established. His collection of poems entitled "The House of Life," he calls "A Sonnet-Sequence," opening with an introductory sonnet and divided into two extensive parts — Part First, "Youth and Change," consisting of fifty-nine sonnets, and Part Second, "Change and Fate," of forty-two; thus exceeding the Spenserian limit of eighty-eight. In addition to this elaborate series, we note "Sonnets on Pictures," eleven in number; and "Sonnets for Works of Art," thirteen in all. Among his "Poems in Italian" there are two of the sonnet order, and in his "Miscellaneous Poems" we note no less than thirty-one selections, making a total of one hundred and fifty-eight, thus surpassing by four the extended Shakespearean collection. To cite particular sonnets from this elaborate list is almost invidious. The most representative series is "The House of Life," with its deep emotive quality, reminding us of Spenser's "Amoretti" and Mrs. Browning's

"Sonnets from the Portuguese"; so that it might well be called, as suggested, "The House of Love." It is a presentation in verse of the philosophy of life, of the bitter-sweet element in all human experience, and yet submitted in hope and faith, and thus sharply distinguished in tone from the pessimistic strains of Arnold and Clough.

Such titles as "Love Enthroned," "Heart's Hope," "Life-In-Love," "Love and Hope," "Love's Last Gift," "Transfigured Life," "Soul's Beauty," "Lost Days," "The One Hope," "Passion and Worship," will serve to suggest the dominance of feeling and the sentiment of love. In other collections, the range of topics is wider, as seen in "The Church-Porch," "Spring," "Winter"; tributes to the poets, as "Coleridge," "Keats," and "Shelley"; while even here the purely sentimental dominates the mental, and confirms the consensus of literary critics that Rossetti rarely rises to the Shakespearean or Miltonic level as a sonnet-writer, there being, as Benson states it, "a passionate voluptuousness which must offend the temperate and controlled spirit." The emotion and artistic charm are present, verbal richness and structural beauty, undoubted poetic personality and a consistent, lyric ideal, but little that stirs the bet-

ter nature to its depths or lifts the reader to inspiring experiences and outlook.

In opening the poems of Swinburne, we find, as with Burns and Moore and Byron, comparatively few examples of the sonnet proper, his lyric product best expressing itself in ode and ballad and song, outside the limited structure of the sonnet stanza. The twenty-four sonnets under the caption "*Dirae*," and some half-dozen others in "*Poems and Ballads*," such as "*Love and Sleep*," "*The White Czar*," "*To Kossuth*" and "*To Rizpah*," include the sum-total of his work along this special line, and evince little poetic merit above the average. We look in vain in any of them for that peculiar lyric melody and charm that we so often find in such collections as "*Songs before Sunrise*" and "*Songs of the Springtide*."

In Mrs. Browning we have a more distinctive sonnet-writer, as seen in her two collections, — the forty-five examples of a somewhat miscellaneous nature, and the forty-four examples under the title "*Sonnets from the Portuguese*," which, as we know, were a tribute to her husband, and have no special reference to the title which they bear. As Saintsbury insists, they rank "with the

noblest efforts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in this exquisite form," "which can only be paralleled," as another critic states it, "in the immortal lines in which Dante has embalmed the name of Beatrice." "Sonnets from her own heart," they have fittingly been called, as she well-nigh exhausts the deep devotion of her ardent nature in her attempt fully to embody her truly passionate love. In their pervasive emotive quality they are thus superior to the "Amoretti" of Spenser and Rossetti's "House of Life," where the dominance of mere personal sentiment so often degenerates into fulsome amatory tribute, so as to impair the mental vigor of the stanzas and far remove them from the virile verses of Milton and Wordsworth. Constituting, as they do, a cycle of elegies, we are reminded, as we read them, of the "In Memoriam" of Tennyson, though Mrs. Browning's most zealous defenders would not insist upon placing these selections on the same poetic level with the Laureate's elegy. Worthy of all praise as a tender tribute to a lost husband, they seldom rise to the level of poetry that can be called great. Indeed, it is in her Miscellaneous Sonnets, as we view them, that Mrs. Browning

is best seen in this form of lyric, where she feels herself at liberty to go out beyond the narrow limits of personal sorrow and choose her themes in the wider world of human thought and life. Hence, on such topics as "The Soul's Expression," "The Seraph and Poet," "On a Portrait of Wordsworth," "Work," "Futurity," "Finite and Infinite," "Insufficiency," and "Life" the author gives us suggestive and often inspiring stanzas, marked alike by intellectual and emotive vitality and literary art. The first one of the collection — "The Soul's Expression" — is as representative as any of this higher type,

"With stammering lips and insufficient sound
I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and night
With dream and thought and feeling interwound,
And inly answering all the senses round
With octaves of a mystic depth and height
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual ground.
This song of soul I struggle to outbear
Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,
And utter all myself into the air:
But if I did it, — as the thunder-roll
Breaks its own cloud, my flesh would perish there,
Before that dread apocalypse of soul."

The sonnet entitled "Insufficiency" is of this same ennobling order,

"When I attain to utter forth in verse
Some inward thought, my soul throbs audibly
Along my pulses, yearning to be free
And something farther, fuller, higher, rehearse."

Here we have the inward and passionate struggle toward self-expression, the chafing of the spirit under the restraints of the flesh, and the outlook of the finite into the realm and glories of the infinite.

Thus have we seen from a brief survey of the English sonnet from Spenser to Mrs. Browning that it partakes of the general history of our literature in its substantive features, and in the diversity of excellence that it exhibits as the literature develops, though it cannot be said to have reached that maximum merit to which the English poetry as a whole attained in the Victorian Era. The two master-poets of the age, Tennyson and Browning, scarcely acknowledged its claims, while most of those who essayed to illustrate it, as Matthew Arnold and Swinburne, seemed to reserve their best poetic skill and vigor for other forms of verse. It is possible that the golden age of the sonnet-lyric is yet to appear as our literary history expands. Certain it is that our vernacular verse cannot well dispense with so historic and

attractive a form. While its required structure may be said to limit in a sense the play of the poetic imagination and hold the poet somewhat too strictly within a definitely determined province, this very limitation tends to concentrate poetic genius and by the pronounced emphasis of the quality of the verse more than atone for mere amount of poetic product. Though our American Poe was wrong when he insisted that a long poem is a contradiction in terms, there is a sense in which as a poem develops in unlimited freedom, the quantitative tends to take the place of the qualitative and the poet's power abates as the composition of his verse continues.

Especially in the province of the lyric is this principle of brevity important, in that the expression of feeling should be held steadily under rational control lest it pass the borders of the sane and wholesome in poetic art. Even poetic license must have its metes and bounds; while, on the principle of literary variety, epic and dramatic verse and the larger examples of the lyric stand in need of this "little song" to complete the cycle of poetic forms and insure the most beneficent poetic effect.

III

THE SONNETS OF SHAKESPEARE

ONE of the later and best English sonneteers thus writes upon the excellence of the sonnet:—

“Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frowned,
Mindless of its just honours; with this key
Shakespeare unlocked his heart; the melody
Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound;
A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound;
Camöens soothed with it an exile's grief;
The Sonnet glittered a gay myrtle leaf
Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned
His visionary brow: a glow-worm lamp,
It cheered mild Spenser, called from Faery-land
To struggle through dark ways; and, when a damp
Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
The Thing became a trumpet; whence he blew
Soul-animating strains—alas, too few!”

These lines and the additional sonnets which Wordsworth wrote are sufficient to indicate his personal and literary estimate of their value and the high place they sustain in developing English verse. Involving all known poetic forms, the epic, dramatic, lyric, descriptive, and didactic; expressing all the varied feelings of the human heart, and related historically to the consecutive growth of

English and Continental Letters, they not only make a claim on the attention of the literary student, but well repay that attention by the manner in which they minister to literary art and taste. The origin and earliest history of the English sonnet takes us back to the twelfth century of Italian letters, in the territory of Provence, and to the long list of Italian sonneteers — Dante, Petrarch, Alfieri, Tasso, Ariosto, and Boccaccio, some of whom, as Petrarch, did no better work than in this sphere, and all of whom, even Dante, intensified thereby the interest and profit of their work as poets. The sonnet was thus at home in Italy, and Italy's greatest poets were equally at home in its composition and interpretation. It was but natural, therefore, that in the reign of Henry the Eighth, at the opening of the sixteenth century, when Italian literature was in high repute in Europe, and was exerting unwonted influence in English verse, the sonnets of Petrarch and his contemporaries should come into prominence in England and directly modify the poetic product of the most notable authors of the time. This they did, and the impression is particularly noticeable in the poetry of Wyatt and Surrey. In fact, the oldest sonnet in English is a translation of one of Pe-

trarch's by Wyatt — his co-worker (Surrey), however, excelling him in this particular form. Critics have naturally called attention to the fact that we have no sonnet distinctively from Chaucer, even though he was an Italian scholar, a resident for a time in Italy, acquainted especially with the poetry of Petrarch, whom, perhaps, he had seen in person, and strongly inclined, as a poet, to the subject of love and sentiment. For this singular result certain reasons have been assigned — that the connection of the English court, at the time, was closer with France than with Italy; that the great Italian sonneteers had not as yet become current in England, and that Chaucer's governing tendency in verse was toward the dramatic and descriptive rather than the lyrical. Be this as it may, the fact is that, though Chaucer exhibited, in some of his shorter poems, the substantive qualities of the sonnet as lyric, nothing of its external form is found. After the sonnet had been fairly introduced in the Elizabethan Era, many poets of greater or lesser fame essayed it — Raleigh, Sidney, Spenser in his "Amoretti," so suggestively Italian, Jonson, and Drummond, and, later in the history, Milton, who especially illustrates the influence of South-European models by writing some

of his sonnets in Italian. Such an example as "The Massacre of Piedmont" is directly suggestive of Italian civil and religious history.

As to the nature and structure of the sonnet, it may be said that there is no form of English verse more definite, and none for the violation of which there is less tolerance, among literary critics. Whatever its theme or general character, it must be short, as ode or ballad, canto or idyll, made up specifically of fourteen lines, divided into the major and minor sections, of eight and six lines respectively (the octave and sextette), there being two rhymes in the one and three in the other, the rhymes differing in the two divisions. These conditions are rigorous. As has been said, "The requirements of the drama, nay, even of the epic, are not proportionately greater." "The steadiness of hand," writes Forman, "and clearness of mind required for rounding into the invariable limit of fourteen iambic lines some weighty matter of thought or delicate subtlety of feeling is not easy to overrate." Thus the form as well as the character of our English sonnet has been taken from the Italian. So, it might seem, at first sight, that a structure so imperious and rigid would not be a popular one either with

author or reader. The reverse has been found to be true, its very definiteness acting as a protection against undue poetic license, and holding the poet closely to the fundamental law that it shall have one leading idea, with a free variety of rhyme.

It is thus that Wordsworth, in a sonnet on the sonnet, justifies this accepted form as a helpful restriction :—

“ Nuns fret not at their convent’s narrow room ;
And hermits are contented with their cells ;
And students with their pensive citadels ;
Maids at the wheel, the weaver at his loom,
Sit blithe and happy ; bees that soar for bloom,
High as the highest Peak of Furness-fells,
Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells :
In truth, the prison, unto which we doom
Ourselves, no prison is : and hence to me,
In sundry moods, ’twas pastime to be bound
Within the Sonnet’s scanty plot of ground ;
Pleased if some souls (for such there needs must be)
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
Should find short solace there, as I have found.”

Here and there, as in Milton, there is a departure from the prescribed form as to lines and meter, but never a departure from this law of unity and continuity of idea. As to possible deviation of structure, there are two types that may be said to have both foreign and native sanction. The one is that which contains three regular quat-

rains and a couplet, as in Coleridge and Shakespeare. The other and more exceptional form contains in the major two kinds of quatrain — the regular (in which the first and third lines and the second and fourth rhyme) and the Tennysonian (in which the first and fourth and the second and third lines rhyme) — and in the minor has three alternately rhyming couplets, as in some of the sonnets of Byron. From the fact that Shakespeare has used the first of these varying forms, it has become widely sanctioned, one of his collection (cxxvi.) having but twelve lines, and one of them (cxlv.) having the tetrameter instead of the pentameter line. These deviations are allowed, on grounds of variety and final effect. It is thus that Matthew Arnold refers to Goethe approvingly as preferring substance to technique, or if we must have technique, that it be “organic and not conventional.” No poetry can afford to emphasize unduly what has been called the “etiquette of form,” the sacrifice of sense and sentiment to structure. In all literature, the creative must control the artistic and no law or method be so inflexible as never to allow of modification in the interests of truth and lasting effect. Here, again, Shakespeare evinced his poetic genius.

THE SONNETS OF SHAKESPEARE

These, with the possible exception of Spenser's "Amoretti," are the only sonnets of special merit prior to Milton. We notice the first mention of them in 1598, in Meres's "Palladis Tamia," their first publication being in 1609, but a few years after the close of the reign of Elizabeth. Naturally, from their first appearance down to this day these poems have invited unwonted interest and study; partly, because of their intrinsic merit thus early in the history of English literature; and, mainly, because they are Shakespeare's, whose chief distinction lies within the separate province of dramatic verse. Thus we have extant a large body of Shakespearean sonnet-literature, quite apart from that pertaining to the plays, every Shakespearean critic devoting some attention thereto, and writers such as Leigh Hunt and Massey, Palgrave and Dowden, giving special space to their discussion.

The number of his sonnets is one hundred and fifty-four, probably produced between 1590 and 1605, though the exact period must always remain a matter of conjecture. So as to the one to whom they are addressed critical opinion has naturally varied, whether to a male or female friend, and, if to the former, whether to the Earl of Southampton

or to Lord Pembroke. "It seems to me," writes Coleridge, "that the sonnets could only have come from a man deeply in love, and in love with a woman"; while the historian Hallam, on the contrary, affirms that such a notion is utterly "untenable." They have been referred to Raleigh as their object; to Elizabeth; to Hamnet, Shakespeare's son; and to some imaginary person, male or female, their relation to Southampton having the weight of authority. So cautious a critic as Hudson thus writes: "It will take more than has as yet appeared to convince me that when the poet wrote these and similar lines his thoughts were traveling anywhere but home to the bride of his youth and the mother of his children." Even their authorship is in question, referred by some, as the plays have been, to Bacon, and with as little reason. Raleigh, also, has been cited as the author. As to the subject-matter and purpose of the sonnets, a still wider variety of view has been taken, a topic second to no other in its importance as determining their true place in English letters.

The question that first arises is as to their autobiographical character. Have they such a character at all and, if so, to what extent? According to Dowden, this theory is invested with serious

difficulties; while such a critic as Dyce concedes that a few of them, at least, may have such a bearing. Wordsworth's phrase that in them Shakespeare "unlocked his heart" has been pressed into the service of this theory. The theory, as a whole, is vitally connected with the question of the relation of the sonnets to each other,—whether or not they are marked by unity and sequence, and were written by Shakespeare in serial form, and with reference to some leading purpose or chain of events. Modern criticism has substantially agreed as to the twofold division of the sonnets; the first (i.—cxxv.) addressed to some male friend, as Southampton; and the second (cxxvii.—cliv.) addressed to some female friend, "the dark-haired" woman of his love, the "mysterious heroine," sonnet cxxvi. being an envoy, lying between the two divisions. In this classification, the autobiographical feature would be more prominent in the second section. Beyond this analysis, critics have found groups and subgroups of different members and orders, arranged largely on the basis of a more or less distant relation to the poet's life and history. Thus Browne divides them into six groups; all, save the last, being addressed to his friend the Earl of Pembroke, save those

(cxxxvii.—clii.) to his female friend on her infidelity. Without exception, however, they are, as he holds, leaves from the life of the author. Others divide them into four groups. Some contend that the first of the two large groups is autobiographical, and the second, dramatic; while other critics argue that they are, throughout, fictitious and visionary. Here, again, the facts are so meager and untrustworthy that every intelligent reader must be left to his own judgment as to just how and to what extent the poet appears in them. In his plays, as we know, he has succeeded in so concealing himself that the closest inspection has not been able to detect his personality. They are wholly impersonal and objective, and representative of human nature as such. Reasoning by analogy, we would not expect to find much, if any, of such personal reference in the sonnets; while, on the other hand, they are the distinctive type of verse in which an author appears and expresses his innermost life. It would be natural, if Shakespeare, true to the genius of lyric poetry, had really “unlocked his heart.” As to the subject-matter and purpose, a second view is, that the sonnets are allegorical, addressing ideal manhood or dramatic art or the spirit of beauty, or, perchance, the poet’s

ideal self, or the reformed church of England; the "dark woman" of the closing sonnets being the bride of the Canticles, the pure church of Christ. So careful a critic as Fleay carried this mythical and metaphysical theory to the most pronounced extreme, making all the allusions subjective; even the poet's "lameness" referred to in sonnet lxxxix. being that of his verse.

It is clear that such an order of interpretation as this would know no rational bounds, the advocates of it being driven, perforce, to the wildest conjectures as to this or that sonnet, and being quite unable in this visionary theory to unify the sonnets in any acceptable manner. Moreover, the theory is entirely out of keeping with the personality and purpose of the poet, who, from first to last, dealt with realities in nature and the world and aimed directly at practical, objective ends. A third and more plausible theory effects a combination of the two already mentioned, finding in the sonnets the historical and the imaginative, truth and romance, and so interacting as that each gives to the other something of its own character. This is the view of Gerald Massey, by which, as he thinks, he has untied all knots and reconciled all differences. According to this view, we have the

historical element, in that the author addresses sonnets to Southampton as a friend; and then the romantic element, in that, at the Earl's request, he writes some, personating the Earl, to his much admired Elizabeth Vernon. Personating the lady, also, he writes, by the way of answer, similar sonnets of affection to the Earl. Here we have the union of fact and fiction; the insuperable difficulty being now to discriminate between the two, to assert where the historical ends and the allegorical begins, each reader being left to his own preference and method of interpretation. Hence, we resort to the view first broached, and hold, with such critics as Palgrave, Dowden, Furnivale, and Hallam, that the sonnets express "his own feeling in his own person." Nor does this mean that every line and stanza is personal and may be referred to some well-known incident or experience in the poet's life, but that the dominant element is the autobiographic one, so much so as to make all else secondary and compel us to explain it in accordance with the accepted theory. Moreover, this theory meets more difficulties than any other, has less difficulties of its own than any other, and is most fully in accord with the method of the plays; for not only are the historical plays, so-

called, historical, but such tragedies as "Hamlet" and "Othello" have a distinctive historical background and basis, while in nearly all of his dramatic work literature and life are conjoined, and the reader is never allowed long to wander in the territory of mere romance.

Turning now from the origin and purpose of the sonnets to their intrinsic poetic quality, we note, first of all, their distinctive lyrical character. They are not only sonnets but lyric sonnets, "born," as Dowden states it, "of the union of heart and imagination"; penetrated, as Trench affirms, "with a repressed passion." It is this impassioned quality, "the sensuous and passionate" element of which Milton speaks, that first impresses the candid reader, so that he can be in no doubt as to what constitutes their leading features. Whether the lyric be somber or sportive; whether love rewarded or rejected be the theme; whether satisfaction or regret be the result of his reflections upon his own life, in every instance the keynote is lyric. In no part of Shakespeare's dramatic work is feeling so pronounced, the personal element in these poems being largely accountable for such a decided presence of the emotional. Autobiography naturally takes such a form. An

additional feature is their mental vigor, "characterized," as Coleridge expresses it, "by boundless fertility of thought"; or, as Trench states it, "double-shotted with thought." This intellectual feature is well worth emphasizing, partly, to illustrate the oft-forgotten connection between poetry and thought; and, partly, to maintain Shakespeare's repute as a thinker in verse and not a mere romanticist. This principle is especially important in the sphere of lyric verse and in the composition of the sonnet. Here, if anywhere, sentiment may find it easy to take the place of sense, or, at least, to control it. In the sonnet, where love is so naturally the theme, the temptation to the superficial and purely amatory is so strong that not a few of our sonneteers, as Sidney, have succumbed to it. Here, as elsewhere, Shakespeare is true to his best instincts; and while the sonnets are not intellectual verse in the sense in which "Hamlet" and "Othello" are, they are sufficiently so to maintain the close relation of feeling to thought. As to each of these features, emotion and mental vigor, the sonnets, of course, differ as do the plays, some of them being more conspicuously good than others; while it may be

said without question that the first and larger division (i.-cxxv.) is by far the more intellectual of the two, the second section being more emotional and often to the borders of sensuous passion. Some of the more notable of the sonnets are: the twenty-ninth, as it opens,

“When in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes,
I all alone beweepe my outcast state”;

the thirtieth, beginning,

“When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past;
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wall my dear time’s waste”;

the thirty-second, opening,

“If thou survive my well-contented day,
When that churl death my bones with dust shall
cover.”

Sonnet xxxiii. is of rare beauty, as we read:—

“Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye.”

So, the thirty-seventh,

“As a decrepit father takes delight
To see his active child do deeds of youth.”

In the fifty-fourth, we read:—

“O, how much more doth beauty beauteous seem,
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!”

In the sixty-sixth, we read:—

“Tir’d with all these, for restful death I cry.”

In the seventy-first, the poet sings:—

“No longer mourn for me when I am dead.”

In sonnets lxxiii., xci., xcvi., xcvii., and cxvi., we note exceptionally beautiful specimens. Few have been more often cited than the one hundred and forty-sixth,

“Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
Pressed by these rebel pow’rs that thee array.”

Apart from these examples, it should be remembered that, in many of the sonnets which, as a whole, are not especially excellent, we find occasional lines of rare poetic beauty as well as of personal and historical interest. It is this feature which, as much as any other, makes these poems valuable, both on the literary and biographical side. Thus, in the second one, we read:—

“When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty’s field.”

So, in the third,

“Thou art thy mother’s glass, and she in thee
Calls back the lovely April of her prime.”

In the twenty-third, we read,

“O, learn to read what silent love hath writ.”

In the twenty-ninth, we note the oft-quoted line,

“Desiring this man’s art, and that man’s scope.”

In the thirty-first, are the lines,

“How many a holy and obsequious tear
Hath dear religious love stol’n from mine eye.”

In the sixtieth, we have the choice couplet,

“Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end.”

In the seventy-third, are the lines,

“In me thou seest the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,”

and the exquisite line,

“Bare ruin’d choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.”

In the ninety-seventh, we note:—

“How like a winter hath my absence been
From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!”

Thus the lines run on with varying beauty and force, notable enough, however, to give Shakespeare the honor of being a lyric as well as a dramatic poet, and to place these poems in the list with Milton’s and Wordsworth’s as marking the highest lyrical level reached in the English sonnet.

A series of Open Questions as to Shakespeare

and his sonnets arise from this survey, and we inquire:—

1. As to the rival poet of whom he so sadly speaks. Criticism has adduced a long list of names, as Spenser, Marlowe, Drayton, Daniel, Chapman, and others, and an unsettled question it remains.

2. As to the “dark-haired” woman of the closing sonnets,—the “master-mistress of his passion.” Who she was, what her character was, what her relations to Shakespeare and his rival poet were, and what the purpose of thus addressing her in verse in terms of such endearment and rebuke, are queries “ill to solve.” Possibly she was Southampton’s Elizabeth Vernon; or Sidney’s Stella, the disappointed Lady Rich and the object of Pembroke’s regard as a rival suitor; or, as Acheson holds, Mistress Davenant.

3. A closely related and more general question pertains to the personal character of the poet as thus revealed, whether good or bad, whether socially praiseworthy or doubtful, a question forced upon the critic by the second section of the sonnets.

Thus in one of them (cxlii.) he writes: “Love is my sin,” and in another (cxliv.):—

"Two loves I have of comfort and despair
Which like two spirits do suggest (tempt) me still;
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit a woman coloured ill.
To win me soon to hell."

It is thus that Dowden insists, "We must believe that Shakespeare at some time of his life was influenced by a woman, a woman faithless to her vow in wedlock." It is indeed this struggle between his better and his baser self that we have given us in this second series (cxxxvi.-cliv.), with the probable result that the better self prevailed. In fine, the picture of the poet's character in the sonnets is not altogether inviting. It is that of "The Rape of Lucrece" and "Venus and Adonis," rather than that of "Cymbeline" and "The Tempest"; and yet all praise is due him for the brave struggle that he waged in an age when it was easy enough to yield and to fall, nor do we know in literature of a more suggestive example of moral struggle than this one of the sonnets, even though they disclose the weaker side of the author's character.

4. A further question would run as follows: Do they increase the poet's fame as a poet? Here, again, there is a wide diversity of view. "It is impossible," declares Hallam, "not to wish that

Shakespeare had never written them," an opinion to which Palgrave objects. Viewing the subject impartially, we must insist that the sonnets, either on their personal or literary side, would be greatly missed. There are enough stanzas of merit and scattered lines of genuine verse to reveal the poet's lyric art, and thus to widen out the already comprehensive scope of his genius. Not to be compared with the plays, they are still unique, and, to this extent, indicative of genius. Because Milton in "*Samson Agonistes*" fails to reach the level of "*Comus*," or "*Paradise Lost*," we do not press the principle of destructive criticism to its limit, but aim to reach the measure of average excellence. So we deal with Tennyson as a dramatist and lyricist. That Shakespeare wrote sonnets at all is somewhat surprising, and equally so that he wrote them as well as he did.

A study of the later sonnets of our literature as thus opened is made especially inviting, on through the work of Milton and Byron, Keats and Wordsworth, down to the close of the nineteenth century, and the opening of the twentieth, not omitting their examination as revealed in the pages of our own American poets. It was our gifted

American poet Gilder who asks, and answers for us, the question as to this particular form of verse:—

“What is a sonnet? ’T is the pearly shell
That murmurs of the far-off murmuring sea;
A precious jewel carved most curiously;
It is a little picture painted well.
 It is the tear that fell
From a great poet’s hidden ecstasy.”

IV

THE POETRY OF COLERIDGE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, son of Rev. John C. Coleridge, of Devonshire, England (Ottery St. Mary), Headmaster of the Grammar School, was, from the first, a character of unique and even eccentric interest. As he says of his own boyhood, "I never thought as a child, never had the language of a child." As a mere lad, he was inquisitive as to the nature and reasons of things, speculative and imaginative, cogitating or dreaming when his companions were playing.

At school at "Christ's Hospital," we find him at Cambridge, in 1791, which university, for some unexplained reason, he suddenly left, enlisting as a private in the Fifteenth Light Dragoons, returning, however, to Cambridge in April, 1794. In 1795, he entered on the rôle of a lecturer at Bristol, a city of importance in the history of Coleridge, as it was there he met Southey, whom he had seen at Oxford, and Lovell, the publisher,

which two married sisters of the lady, Miss Fricker, whom Coleridge was yet to marry. His lectures, "Conciones ad Populum," as they were called, were designed to be popular, political discussions, in the service of what he deemed to be the rights and liberties of the people. In 1796, a journalist in the pages of *The Watchman* and, later, in *The Morning Post* and *Morning Chronicle*, and *The Friend*, all of these schemes were unsuccessful, as might have been supposed, by reason of the poet's unfitness for such a line of work, and the capricious nature of his mind and plans. It was in these years that he had in view, with Southey and others, his pantisocratic scheme, a semi-socialistic and political plan to be carried out in republican America, on the banks of the Susquehanna, a species of romantic adventure, as it would seem, especially attractive to British literary minds. Coleridge, in this respect, was a fanatic, making plans involving large capital, when he had scarcely funds enough at his command to meet his ordinary expenses.

In 1797-1800, he began what has been called his critical career, as a student of philosophy at Göttingen, studying the German language and civilization, and, especially, German metaphysics.

His well-executed translation of the dramas of Schiller, shortly after his return to England, revealed the practical results he had reached in the mastery of German.

At Keswick, 1800-04, we reach the crisis of his life, for it was now, when his literary ambitions were at the highest, that we find him succumbing more and more slavishly to that accursed opium-habit which was, at length, to occasion the loss of physical and mental vigor, the miscarriage of his best schemes, and the consequent loss of all heart and hope. There are few, if any, examples in our literary history sadder than that of Coleridge, in this respect, and he thus belongs to that list of unfortunate English authors that so strikingly represents the self-inflicted loss of mental and moral strength. It is not strange that it was at this time (1802) that he wrote his pathetic "Dejection: An Ode," a kind of elegy on his own misfortunes, due to physical causes.

"A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
In word, or sigh, or tear.

.

My genial spirits fail;
And what can these avail

To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?

"There was a time when, though my path was rough,
 This joy within me dallied with distress,
 And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
 Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
 For hope grew round me, like the twining vine,
 And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.
 But now afflictions bow me down to earth,
 Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth."

In England again in 1806, a physical and mental wreck, he remained there till 1816, when he committed himself, in sheer desperation, to the guardian care of a Mr. Gillman of Highgate, to whose kind ministries Coleridge owed it that he secured any measure of bodily improvement. The letter which he wrote to Gillman as he was about placing himself in his hands, and the picture of this opium-ruined genius coming to Gillman's home, with the proof-sheets of his beautiful poem "Christabel" in his hands, form one of the most touching scenes in English literary history. Feeling, as he did, that now, for the first time, there was some hope of restoration to health and congenial labor, he wrote, in his letter to Godwin, as follows: "If I should leave you restored to my moral and bodily health, it is not myself only that will love and honor you; every friend I have (and, thank

God! in spite of this wretched vice, I have many and warm ones, who were friends of my youth and have never deserted me) will thank you with reverence." Such complete restoration, however, was not to come, as for nearly a score of years, in this quiet home, under partial emancipation from his opium-habit and in modified literary activity, he passed his life, and finally closed it in 1834. It was in 1817 that his "*Biographia Literaria*" appeared, with its invaluable criticisms on poetry. In 1818 he lectured in London, his discussions covering the wide province of European civilization and literature, and English letters, and kindred topics,—his Shakespearean critiques forming one of the best contributions ever made to this special department of study. It was natural that in 1825, far on in his life of study and meditation, his "*Aids to Reflection*" should appear, interrupted as the work had been by poverty, disease, opium, and want of method as a man and student. Of his closing years, the details need not be given. It was when he knew that his end was near, that he characteristically wrote, "Hooker wished to live to finish his '*Ecclesiastical Polity*'; so, I own, I wish life and strength had been spared to me to complete my philosophy." On July 25, 1834, he

died, in the midst of his unfinished plans, "more of a great man," says Thomas Arnold, "than any one who has lived within the four seas in my memory." This may be extreme eulogium, but serves to show what an impression Coleridge made on so cautious and candid a critic as Arnold — praise, it may be added, in which Arnold of Rugby is by no means alone. The summary of his life and character as a man and an author is found in his want of will power, in what has been called, singularly enough, by De Quincey, his lack of "fiber." From whatever point of view we examine his career, this defect comes into prominence, expressing itself in various forms, as indifference, indecision, caprice, and visionary scheming, an almost total absence of the regular and resolute. It appears in the wayward freaks of his boyhood; in his fitful life at Cambridge; in his entering the English army; in his slavish surrender to opium; in his tours through Europe; in his choice of friends and pursuits, and in the general tenor of his life.

It was this that lay at the basis of his domestic unhappiness, naturally expected from a marriage partly forced upon him, and partly of his own fanciful choosing. Just as good Richard Hooker

was kindly informed by Mrs. Churchman, who was nursing him in his illness, that she had a promising daughter who, if desired, could do it just as well, and the affable English divine acquiesced, to his ultimate sorrow; so, as two sisters had, respectively, married Southey and Lovell, and there was a remaining sister who was seeking an evangelical alliance, Coleridge was courteously informed of the fact, took the hint, and out of sympathy with the belated maiden closed the social contract. So his great pantisocratic scheme in the New World was the offspring of this want of will, he not knowing from one day to the next where he would settle or what he would do. So, in authorship, his plans were equally vacillating; with theology and philosophy one day, and poetry the next; with translations of dramas one day, and dreaming the next. It was thus impossible for him to complete any plan, to leave any such thing as a finished philosophical system or connected body of literary work.

There are two elements of special attractiveness in his character that should be noted. One was his *tenderness of spirit*, as evinced by his interest in children, expressed in his poem "To the Children of Christ's Hospital"; by his sympathy for

the suffering, as expressed in his poem "To an Unfortunate Woman"; by his anxiety lest he might be a burden to his friends; by his deep interest in rising and struggling authors, and by his domestic life, even after discord entered. A further feature was his *reverence of spirit*, as he wrote "An Evening Prayer" for children; a series of "Meditative Poems" and "Religious Musings," declaring, as he was dying, "As God hears me, the originating . . . and sustaining wish . . . in my heart was to exalt the glory of his name," and, he added, "to promote the improvement of mankind." Thus he lived and died, his own worst enemy, a great experimenter in the realm of thought; and leaving the English world yet in doubt as to what he might have done, had his splendid faculties been fully under his control.

HIS POETRY

It is now in place to examine Coleridge's poetic work, even though, by the general consent of critics, his ablest work was in the province of prose; such productions as his "Aids to Reflection" and his "Lectures on Shakespeare" giving him a high place among English writers. Fully three-fourths of his authorship was of this order.

In the threefold division of an author's life and work given us by Mr. Traill, his biographer, the first period is called *The Poetical*, extending from 1772 to 1779, the date of the beginning of his German life and his more specifically critical and philosophic labors. Thus we find him, in common with Pope and others, "lipping in numbers" in his boyhood, the results of which are given us in what are called his "Juvenile Poems." Such important selections as his "Monody on the Death of Chatterton," his twelve Sonnets, his "Religious Musings," and "Ode to the Departing Year" belong to this earlier era; as, indeed, "The Ancient Mariner," the First Part of "Christabel," "Kubla Khan," and "Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni." In fact, this poetic period, though so early, included some of the best years of his life, before he became involved in the mazes of German metaphysics and in the deeper mazes induced by opium. It is now (in 1794) that he was working with Southey and Lovell in Bristol, in the composition of "The Fall of Robespierre," an experiment in dramatic writing that did no credit to any one of its three composers. It was shortly after (1796-97) that his acquaintance with Wordsworth assumed permanent form, one of its

happiest results being the joint preparation of "The Lyrical Ballads," published in 1798; the far larger part, however, being by Wordsworth. "The Ancient Mariner," as we are told, had been planned and partially composed as Coleridge and Wordsworth roamed at will over the Quantock Hills. These "Miscellaneous Poems," or "Poems on Various Subjects," as they were called in the first edition (1797), exhibit most of the marks of immaturity, with exceptional features of real poetic fervor. As Saintsbury plainly expresses it, "'Religious Musings,' though it has had its admirers, is terribly poor stuff; 'The Monody on the Death of Chatterton' might have been written by fifty people during the century before it. 'The Destiny of Nations' is a feeble rant, but 'The Ode on the Departing Year' strikes a very different note." It was this occasional striking "of a different note" by Coleridge that, despite all his poetic defects, kept alive his fame, and led the English people to be on the alert for something from his pen still better, that "different note" being at length so different, in "The Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel," as to satisfy, in part, the expectations of the public.

It is not a little to the praise of Coleridge that

when (in 1798) he prepared and issued a second edition of his poems, though adding twelve new selections, he omitted nineteen of the first edition of fifty pieces, candidly stating in the preface that his former poems have been "rightly charged with a profusion of double epithets and a general turgidness."

Hence his main poetic period was in 1797-98, practically but two years, the years in which those poems were produced on which his fame at present rests, his translation of Schiller's "Wallenstein" (in 1799) belonging essentially to the same productive period. His unwonted poetic effort in these few years and the high character of it revealed his capability in this direction, while also seeming to anticipate, in part, the mentally deadening effect of opium; dating, especially, from his life at Keswick, in 1800. The close of the eighteenth century was practically the close of his poetic career, though it was after this that he completed his "Christabel." Apparently forecasting his sad experiences yet to be passed, he applied himself with all the energy at his command, it being but occasionally after this that he roused himself for a season from the influence of the deadly drug whose slave he had become. The only marvel is,

and it has not been sufficiently emphasized, that it was from 1800 on, when he was in the later stages of the opium-habit, and consequently waning health, that he wrote his notable Lectures on Shakespeare and other topics and his various prose productions, the closing years of his life at Highgate being marked by intervals of extraordinary sanity and literary activity. This is true, though he was really a broken-hearted mourner at the funeral of his own splendid faculties. Such a living death is without parallel in the scope of English letters.

CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS POETRY

In turning now to a discussion of the chief characteristics of his verse, it may be noted, at the outset, that most of these features, constitutional or acquired, are common to his verse and prose, thus affecting, in one way or another, every separate product of his pen, his self-induced physical habits determining the action of his mind.

Glancing first at *the defects*, we mark:—

1. The *political or semi-political type of his verse*, as in "The Destruction of the Bastile"; "The French Revolution"; his Sonnets to Erskine, Sheridan, and Kosciusko; "The Destiny of

Nations"; his "Ode to France," and most of his dramatic verse, as "The Fall of Robespierre." This is not to say that acceptable verse of a high order cannot be expressed on civic themes and for political ends, as in the soul-stirring sonnets of Milton and Wordsworth, but that Coleridge did not, as a rule, so express it, and was not capable of so doing. Despite his well-meaning enthusiasm on the French Revolution, as a movement on behalf of civil liberty; and his equally well-meaning though visionary schemes as to his Pantisocracy, the ideal home of freedom of faith and action, his talent was wholly elsewhere; the natural action of his mind being introspective, and not excursive and far-reaching. Moreover, his political theories were so changeable, through Republicanism and Toryism and Socialism and other isms, that he had no well-defined cause to plead — no clear, ringing note of appeal, as Milton had in the days of Cromwell; so that where we should find genuine passion and sublime outbursts of loyalty and civic pride, we meet with the veriest platitudes and truisms on liberty and country. In his twelve sonnets, there is not one that rises to the level of a masterly poem, being devoid of strong thought and stirring expression, while they are often

marred by that overwrought diction to which he was too prone.

2. We note, further, a half-dozen poems excepted, that there is *no sign of a clear and strong poetic instinct*; no evident presence of "the faculty divine" or of the "vision divine"; no interior poetic perception, that sees at once the hidden beauty of thoughts and things and is able to embody it in poetic form; little governing poetic passion, that makes a poem an impersonation, and sways the soul of the reader who yields himself to it without reserve. Here and there, as in "Christabel" and "The Ancient Mariner," there is a temporary and partial manifestation of it; but it is no sooner evident than it is gone, and the heaven-soaring poet descends at once to the earth, and abides there. If he failed to accept what he regarded as Wordsworth's too practical, every-day theory of verse, he failed to exhibit any higher theory of his own, so as to show the English world what poetry should be. It is clear that nothing can atone for the absence of this poetic gift and function. The fact that Coleridge's "Lectures on Poetry: its Genius and Expression" are far above the average order, and still well worth the reading, is proof in point that he had but little of the

genius which he extols, and whose presence he himself regarded as an element of poetic power and success.

3. An additional defect is *the fragmentary nature of his poetry*, as indeed, of his prose. It is fitful and capricious, marked by that "dispersiveness" of which critics have spoken; so that when he wrote a representative poem, it was almost as much of a surprise to himself as to his friends. "Christabel" is an unfinished poem; so favorable a judge as his own son Hartley insisting that he could not have finished it, if he would. So, with "Kubla Khan" and other poems, his poetry throughout having this unfinished character. Such fragments came, undoubtedly, from his divided interests as a prose writer and poet; as a day-dreamer and social reformer; as an author and a critic; as a metaphysician, theologian, and versifier; as a romancer and realist. His favorite ideal of the possible combination of the natural and supernatural was of this order. From financial straits and other causes he even essayed the rôle of a Unitarian preacher at Shrewsbury, for which office, indeed, he showed some talent, and which he was induced to remit by the offer of financial aid. A glance at the later portraits of the poet

will reveal that he had the clerical face and dress, and was, to this extent, "approved," as Emerson would say, to the ministry. Shortly after this, he was at Keswick, gradually surrendering body and soul to the ravages of opium, and thus unfitting himself for any high and acceptable service in the cause of truth or humane letters.

There is, however, a *more favorable* view of the poetry of Coleridge, and we note:—

1. That his *poetic diction* is often chaste and expressive enough to call for special emphasis. Critics have freely spoken of the melody and music of his lines, of his metrical skill displayed in conveying thought which in itself is but little above the ordinary. We hear of his "cadence-changes," of his "gorgeous meter," while so good a judge as Swinburne, himself a notable example of an English metrist, speaks in high praise of the lyric aptness of Coleridge as a versifier.

One of the evidences of this rhythmic diction and sense of the harmony of verse is seen in the large variety of his meters. In this respect he is superior to Pope, who carried the English couplet to such an extreme. Hence, if we turn to the poems of Coleridge, we are at once impressed with this variety, as seen in couplet and quatrain; rhyme

and blank verse; the six-line, eight-line, and the nine-line stanza, after the manner of Spenser; and sonnets, with their requisite fourteen lines. In "The Ancient Mariner," while the prevailing form of stanza is the quatrain, other varieties are found; as, also, in "Christabel," are found couplets and quatrains freely interchanged. In fact, all the accepted kinds of foot and line are present, and adapted, in the main, to the changing character of the thought involved. Coleridge, in his justly celebrated "Lectures on Poetry," discusses the subject on the side of Poetic Genius and Poetic Expression. Whatever may be said as to his lack of the former in any marked degree, no one can justly deny him a good degree of excellence in the latter. He had the language-sense, a poetic taste to choose the right and give it its right place in the line, and thus fulfill one of the prime conditions of poetry.

2. A further mark of excellence is the *Mystical and Romantic Element* apparent in his verse, so that the expression applied to "Kubla Khan," a "dream-poem," might aptly be applied to scores of others; notably, to "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," "Christabel," "The Ballad of the Dark Lady," "The Three Graves," "Alice Du Clos,"

and "Phantom or Fact." These titles are suggestive of the fanciful and mythical, of the office of the poetic imagination in the line of romance, of what has been called "psychological curiosity." Such a title as "The Sibylline Leaves" is of a similar type. One of his earliest poems, "The Songs of the Pixies," a race of beings invisibly small and hurtful or helpful to man, is a poem of this kind. He speaks of himself as a boy "reading or fancying; half, one; half, the other." It is this half real and half unreal feature that gives to our author's verse a kind of ethereal or semi-spiritual type, reminding us, at times, of some of the Prose Tales of Hawthorne or Poe, often embodied in what Whipple has called "his exquisite delineations of the heart." "If I were asked," says Devey, "to individualize the character of Coleridge's poetry, I should place its distinctive feature in bringing into prominence the relation of man with the spiritual universe." It is this unearthly element that is so often seen, and which so often holds the reader to the page when more regular and historical methods would fail to do so. That such a feature should be found in a poet whose special lore lay in the sphere of metaphysical studies is, at first, somewhat surpris-

ing, until we recall the fact that much of the philosophizing of that day was vague and purely speculative, leading to no definite result in the establishment of truth. If to this we add the poet's constitutional tendencies and the peculiarity of his personal habits, we can readily see that there was full scope for the fantastic. Even as a prose writer, he was unrealistic, and thereby vitiated much of his influence.

3. Emphasis may also be laid on the prominence given in his verse to *natural life and scenery*—to sketches of the outer world of sea and earth and sky. There is no more pleasing and effective element in Coleridge's poetry than this, and it saves from oblivion much of his verse that would otherwise be forgotten. Some of his poems evince this throughout, while others possess it in occasional lines. It is here that he betrays his relation to the Lake School of Poets, and is proud to do so. It is here that he comes into closest sympathy with Wordsworth and others who have extolled the charms and glories of physical phenomena. It was when wandering over the Quantock Hills that "The Lyrical Ballads" and "The Ancient Mariner" were practically composed. In-

quiring where "Domestic Peace" may be found, he writes:—

"In a cottaged vale she dwells,
Listening to the Sabbath bells."

In his lines on "Fears in Solitude," he describes the far retreat from war and tumult, as

"A green and silent spot, amid the hills,
A small and silent dell! O'er stiller place
No singing skylark ever poised himself. . . .
Oh! 'tis a quiet, spirit-healing nook!
Which all, methinks, would love; but chiefly he,
The humble man, who, in his youthful years,
Knew just so much of folly, as had made
His early manhood more securely wise."

His "Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni" has justly become an English classic. His "Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement" are lines in which he pours forth in tenderest strain his reluctant withdrawal from the scenes he loved, and in the center of which he would fain spend his days—a place where, as he writes,—

"We could hear
At silent noon, at eve, and early morn,
The sea's faint murmur. . . .
A spot which you might aptly call
The Valley of Seclusion."

So, in writing to his brother of the old home at Ottery St. Mary, he says:—

"A blessed lot hath he, who having passed
His youth and early manhood in the stir
And turmoil of the world, retreats, at length,
To the same dwelling where his father dwelt."

So, on through his verse, ever and anon he breaks forth in praise in that his lot was cast among the hills and lakes of England. It is this fact as much as any other that intensifies the sadness of the sight of this child lover of nature, when in his closing life at Highgate he was bereft of heart and hope by the fatal curse of opium.

4. A final feature deserving mention is the poet's *vigorous invectives against national sin and wrong*—his impassioned pleading for the Rights of Man. It was this element in his nature that explains his attitude toward the French Revolution and socialistic projects, though at times he was led thereby to gross extremes. Thus in his "Ode to the Departing Year," he scored the unholy ambition of nations, and hesitated not to warn England. In his "Fears in Solitude," he wrote:—

"We have offended, oh, my countrymen! . . .

From east to west

A groan of accusation pierces Heaven. . . .

We have drunk up, demure as at a grace,

Pollutions from the brimming cup of wealth. . . .

Yet bartering freedom and the poor man's life

For gold, as at a market! . . .
We gabble o'er the oaths we mean to break;
For all must swear—all and in every place,
College and wharf, council and justice—court;
All, all must swear, the briber and the bribed,
Merchant and lawyer, senator and priest,
The rich, the poor, the old man and the young;
All, all make up one scheme of perjury
That faith doth reel."

Thus the terrible arraignment continues, and lest he be accused of malice, he adds:—

"I have told
O Britons! O my brethren! I have told
Most bitter truth, but without bitterness. . . .
O native Britain! O my Mother Isle!
How shouldst thou prove aught else but dear and holy
To me, who from thy lakes and mountain hills,
Thy clouds, thy quiet dales, thy rocks and seas,
Have drunk in all my intellectual life."

The poem is worthy of Milton, nor do we know in English verse of a stronger protest against a nation's weaknesses and crimes. So in other poems, as in his dramas and translations, we hear an earnest voice in behalf of right.

Such are the main features of merit in the poetry of Coleridge by which he has taken and held his place in the second group of English bards—with Moore, Southey, Landor, Scott, and Shelley.

The language of Saintsbury "that in verse, at least, if not in prose, there is no greater master than Coleridge," cannot be indorsed. The author of a few poems of rare merit, his special worth lies in the fact that, in common with the best minds of his time, he struck "a new note," the sure promise of the "new poetry" just at hand. It is this which atones in Coleridge for many minor blemishes, and forces the critic to rank him higher than his work actually justifies. In this sense, at least, he had "the vision divine," the vision that saw in advance the imperative need of the time; and enough of the "faculty divine" to enable him in part, at least, to satisfy that need.

V

THE POETRY OF WORDSWORTH

It is not our purpose to present, in this discussion, the biographical details of the life of Wordsworth, save in so far as they are inseparably connected with his literary work. In a true sense, his poetry is his best biography. Not only is "The Prelude" autobiographical, but "The Excursion" and many of the shorter poems are substantially so.

We may thus proceed at once to the subject in hand, as embraced in three distinct topics of interest.

HIS THEORY OF POETRY

This was peculiarly his own, called for, in part, by the special character of the time and, mainly, by the instincts and demands of his own nature. He alludes, once and again, to the urgent necessity that existed in English poetry for new canons of criticism and new methods of expression. He thus takes special pains to review the history of English verse, and calls attention to

the false taste which had prevailed among the ablest writers of the day.

He dwells upon the fact that by such erroneous standards Spenser and Shakespeare and Milton had largely lost their hold upon the public mind, while such inferior names as those of Halifax, Browne, Sheffield, and Phillips had found a place of honor in Johnson's "Lives of the English Poets." Not even in the opening of the Romantic Era, in the days of Cowper, did he succeed in discovering what he regarded as the essentials of poetry. It was in place, therefore, for him to develop a theory of his own, and in the second edition of his poems he gives us by way of preface its clear exposition. "Poetry," he says, "is the image of man and nature, its object being to disclose their unity, and poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who being possessed of more than usual sensibility had, also, thought long and deeply." We discover here the important truth which lies at the basis of the author's theory, that all true poetic emotion is under the guidance and government of thought. It is a *contemplative* emotion. Proceeding, then, from the abstract to the concrete, he defines the

poet to be "a man speaking to men, a man who has a greater knowledge of human nature and a more comprehensive soul than most men, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him." He enumerates six distinct qualifications of the poet — Observation or Description, Sensibility, Reflection, Imagination, Invention, and Judgment; in fine, all the elements that enter into the best English verse. From these and kindred statements his theory may be reached. We may speak of it, as the interpretation of God and man through nature, as the real language of man reduced to metrical form. Negatively viewed, it was a protest against the false sentiments of preceding eras. The main object of his poems, as he indicates, was to present the incidents of every-day life in a language understood by all and, at the same time, to preserve the dignity of verse by investing it with imaginative beauty. He cannot speak too strongly against the attempts hitherto made to establish a separate poetic diction, applicable to poetry only. Hence it is that Pope and Dryden and the later formalists are denounced as the originators of a false standard in poetry, and as using a kind of phraseology nowhere to be found among the masses of the people. "I

have wished," says Wordsworth," "to keep the reader in the company of flesh and blood." It was this particular theory that drew down upon the head of the author of it the most stinging invectives of the critics and occasioned the almost personal controversy that he had with Jeffrey and the Edinburgh Reviewers. It was intolerable to these supporters of the old *régime* to note the application of such lowly language to the department of English verse. They ridiculed it as the worst of commonplace, and could see nothing in the future of the nation's poetic art, if developed on this basis, but a slavish adherence to the most threadbare sentiments. "What do we meet here?" asks one of the critics — "Idiot boys, mad mothers, wandering Jews, and phrensied mariners"! In fact, the conventional censors of the time could not from their point of view comprehend the motive of the poet in this new departure. It was so entirely foreign to their conceptions, that they branded it at once as a flagrant literary heresy, and were rather inclined to commiserate a poet who, right in the face of literary history and literary ideal, could thus debase himself to the language of the many. Wordsworth, however, understood fully the need and the purport of his

new method, and addressed himself with untiring devotion to its practical application. He could thus write of himself as, in "The Excursion," he writes of the Wanderer:—

"From his native hills
He wandered far; much did he see of men,
Their manners, their enjoyments, and pursuits,
Their passions, and their feelings; chiefly those
Essential and eternal in the heart,
That, 'mid the simpler forms of rural life,
Exist more simple in their elements,
And speak a plainer language."

In fine, Wordsworth's theory was unique in its origin, content, function and result. It traced all genuine poetic utterance back to the understanding and the heart, and was content to make the daily diction of popular life the medium of its expression. It is true that our author himself departs, at times, from the requirements of his own theory. It is true, moreover, that the theory is often pressed to undue limits as to choice of theme and character of language. Still, the theory itself was the offspring of an ingenuous nature, its governing aim was the education of the people, and it marked a step of decided advance in the national literature of England. It is not, therefore, the teachings of the school of Jeffrey, but those of

the more liberal section of British critics, that we are to follow in the study of the poetry of Wordsworth.

HIS VIEW OF NATURE

Here, as in the realm of verse, he had his own peculiar way of observation and suggestion. We find him, when a mere boy, thoroughly in love with those natural surroundings in the center of which his early life was happily cast. At Cocker-mouth, at Alfoxden, at Hawkshead, at Grasmere, and at Rydal Mount, he was the lover and the child of nature. These different English homes were just such as to confirm his deepest constitutional instincts. He looked upon the physical world, not as a mere collection of forms and objects, but as a grand, sentient organism, informed and transfigured by the spirit that was in it. This presence he calls the Spirit of Nature; but one of the varied forms of the manifestation of the Divine Spirit. He sees God in nature rather than over it,—an immanent and ever-active agency begetting life and love and joy and beauty and cosmic order, under whose benignant influence the soul of man was chastened and enlarged. This is his meaning in the suggestive couplet,

√ "A gracious Spirit o'er the world presides, √
And o'er the heart of man."

It is thus he writes, in "The Prelude"—

"Thou, O Nature, hast fed
My lofty speculations, and in thee
For this uneasy heart of ours I find
A never-failing principle of joy
And purest passion."

To his discerning eye, everything in nature had a life of its own and its separate ministry to man. He goes so far at times as to intimate that all scenes in nature have their respective counterparts in the soul. We can best express his intensive love of nature by saying that he was enchanted by her. Before his constructive imagination she took a kind of bodily presence. He saw her forms, heard her voice, and felt profoundly the varied movements of her inner life. Her melodies thrilled him, and her revelations subdued and pacified him. There was a kind of understanding between them, giving rise to the very closest intimacies. How rapturous his descriptions of his youthful sports in wood and field! In his "Tintern Abbey" and "Descriptive Sketches" he thus writes:—

"For Nature then
To me was all in all. . . . The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,

Their colors and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love."

"Moves there a cloud o'er midday's flaming eye
Upward he looks and calls it luxury."

He had come to think of nature as invested with something of the supernatural, and, reversing Professor Drummond's phraseology, would see spiritual law in the natural world. It was his favorite teaching, that "heaven lies about us in our in-~~in~~ fancy" and thus gives shape and bias to our forming character. This is the very meaning of his touching poem on the "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood." Earth is viewed as but the vestibule of heaven, and the world about us is alive with divinest impulses. There was in all this, it must be conceded, much of the mystical and visionary, and very much of the essentially poetic. There was nothing in earth or sea or sky in which he did not detect poetry, and it was his one ambition to embody these conceptions and impressions in appropriate verse. Arrogant and independent as he often was in the presence of men, he was ever docile and devout in the presence of nature. He acknowledged her primary right to instruct him. He believed that between the human soul and the outer world there

was a mutual interchange of life, a system of preëstablished harmonies, and that life was blessed just to the degree in which man was enabled to discover and apply them. So strong was his love for nature as beneficent, that he seemed either to forget the existence of evil in her or to invest the evil with the attractiveness of the good. Though he alludes to storm and fire, the reference is always to their sublimity, rather than to their agency as destructive and avenging. We never read of the forces of nature as vindictive, of the noxious vapors that poison the air, or of the barren wastes over the face of the earth. Nothing is said of the scriptural relations of nature to the fall of man. Seeing her beneficence only, he counsels all who are in trouble to betake themselves to her for tuition and blessing. He believes that the mental peace which is so desirable is to be secured by "communion with her visible forms." There is something touching in his representation of the attitude in which nature stands to little children. She is their affectionate guardian, watching over their interests with motherly care. It is chiefly for them that she displays her wonders and her beauties. It is her innocent purpose to woo and win them by her constant ministries to their earli-

est joys and needs. Before they become chafed and hardened by the stern experiences of life, it is for her to shape their pliant minds into harmony with her own teachings.

Such was Wordsworth's theory of nature as related to God and men, to poetry and life. The question naturally arises as to its soundness. It is easy to see that it was a theory capable of gross perversion. There seems to have been, at times, a vagueness in the poet's mind as to the true relation of God to his works. In the earlier history, the clear conception of a personal Deity separate from his creation is not as sharply defined as we might wish. There are times in his life and poetry when he seems to love the idea of the universe as objective and to resolve it into the being of God. This tendency was pronounced even in his boyhood. In his philosophic monologues among the mountains, this transcendental tendency is ever manifest. Where others beheld and enjoyed, Wordsworth almost worshiped, and at this point was the peril. Hence, we are not surprised to hear the charge of Pantheism, as Devey thus writes: "This deification of the powers of nature; this effort to break down the antithesis between

mind and matter — this is all at war with the doctrine of the fall and the essential constituents of the Christian faith." This is all true in so far as tendency is concerned. We must believe, however, that the poet escaped the legitimate results of his own theory. At first, it is true that his views of good and evil, of the soul's origin, and of natural phenomena, were more Platonic than biblical. He never came to the statement, however, that the world is but a mode of the divine existence. Maturer opinions and beliefs are seen to modify the earlier for the better, and not, as in the case of Milton, for the worse. No sympathetic reader of his life can forget the serious mental struggle through which he was called to pass at this juncture, taking its intensest form after he had left England and lived at the center of European commotions. Doubts of all kinds harassed him. He was, as so many others have been, the victim of what Hood calls "the Everlasting No"—the blank denial of all personal existence and accountability. The struggle, however, was not a hopeless one. The light gradually broke in upon him, and he saw the truth in its reality and right relations. In noting the religious beliefs of

Wordsworth, it must be confessed that we fail to discover those references to the redemptive system that belong to the writings of a Christian poet. In this, however, he is not alone, while we are bound, moreover, to make due allowance for the different ways in which men manifest their piety. So true is this, that Mr. Brooke in his "Theology of the English Poets," devotes more than one-half of the treatise to Wordsworth's religious life. With the Bible before him, and nature about him, he used, each in his own way, to interpret the other.

"Early had he learned to reverence the volume
That displays the mystery, the life which cannot die,
But in the mountains did he *feel* his faith."

It was precisely to this combination, in his character, of the earthly and the unearthly that he strikingly refers in the poetic desire,

"And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by *natural piety*." ✓

This was his own interpretation of his own religious life. His piety, as his poetry, was, in a true sense, natural, on the basis of which it required but little faith to rise to the supernatural and rest therein.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS POETRY

1. *Its Ethical Character.* Wordsworth was a Literary Moralist. His mind was eminently ethical. As Taine would express it, he was constitutionally devout, "pre-inclined" to piety. We look in vain in his character to find any trace of that groveling temper so often found in authors and authorship. He recognized, from his earliest boyhood onward, his relations to God and duty. Very much of his earlier and later devotion to natural scenery was but the expression of this reverential spirit. Taine pronounces, unwittingly, a most decided eulogium upon Wordsworth's poetry as he ironically writes, "When I shall have emptied my head of all worldly thoughts, and looked up to the clouds for ten years, to refine my soul, I shall love this poetry." It was this very unworldliness which the worldly French critic could not appreciate had he looked up to the clouds for twenty years, and which only serves to cast about the genius of the poet a purer luster than it would otherwise have possessed. We are not surprised to learn from the poet's biography that his friends had designed him for the holy ministry. He understood, however, still better than they, the apti-

tudes of his nature, and preached through his literary work to a far larger audience than he could have reached from an English pulpit. All spheres and activities of human life were to him serious. Hence, we mark in his verse the absence of mere sentiment or of words uttered for their own sake. How striking the absence of that species of poetry so common to all the poets from Spenser to Moore—amorous lyrics in honor of some personal or imaginary favorite! By no means devoid of deep and generous feeling, he always gave expression to it in the forms of simple truth. So decided was this ethical bias, that we fail to discover that ingenuous humor and pleasantry of temper which naturally belongs to the poet's nature. The critics are correct when they affirm that this defect serves to detract from the merits, as indeed from the readableness of his style. Still, the defect is so thoroughly consistent with his character, that what is lost on the side of pleasantry is more than gained on that of an honest adherence to the reality of things. From first to last, there is not a whit of the affected and conventional; no studied artifice by which to attract attention, but the ever-present influence of a lofty moral aim. There is here, what Christopher

North has purposely called, "an out-of-the-worldish look." It was always an occasion of regret to Wordsworth that the great majority of men were so thoroughly engrossed in the pursuit of merely temporal good.

"The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers."

He thus aimed to exalt virtue among all classes. As a citizen, he was cautious and conservative. His very politics were ethical. Stating in one of his familiar talks, "that he had given twelve hours to society for one to poetry," he adds, "The world is running mad with the notion that all its evils are to be relieved by political remedies; whereas the great evils lie deep in the heart, and nothing but religion can remove them." He well knew that all sound political economy was based on public virtue. In the noble work that he did on behalf of popular rights, and in his soul-stirring sonnets on the same key and theme, we can see that he was laboring for the civic good through the use of moral agencies. The peculiar views which he held of nature softened and ennobled his character; so that he always connected conscience with national progress, and made it his mission as a man and a poet to elevate his

race. "One thing," he said, "is a comfort of my old age, that none of my works written since early youth contains a line I should wish to blot out because it panders to the baser passions of our nature." In this respect he falls into line with the larger number of our best English authors, and confirms the character of English literature as eminently moral. In this respect we may add, that there is a far wider distance between British and Continental Letters than the breadth of the English Channel.

In speaking of this ethical element in Wordsworth's poetry, it is in place to refer with emphasis to his *conscientious devotion* to his mission as a poet. Poetry was his solemn calling, and he pursued it as devoutly as a priest serves his parish, or ministers at the altar. This is the high sentiment to which he gives expression in his dedicatory verses to "The White Doe of Rylstone":—

"He serves the Muses erringly and ill,
Whose aim is pleasure light and fugitive;
Oh, that my mind were equal to fulfill
The comprehensive mandate which they give."

It is true, indeed, that we do not find in our author's personal history the presence of those crucial struggles which have tested the moral fidelity

of so many authors, as Dante and Cervantes, Milton and Bunyan. He did not suffer, as they, from exile, imprisonment, or poverty, and yet he may be said to have had his full share of personal trials. Mrs. Browning, in her "Vision of the English Poets," gives us a touching description of the four pools, the waters of which must be tasted by every successful bard. At these Wordsworth had knelt and drunk. He knew what it was to be contemned of men. Rarely has an author been so beset in his early life by the critics and reviewers. Public sentiment was prejudiced against the kindly reception of his poems, while brother bards, either from envy or from an undue concession to the reigning criticism, swelled the general voice against him. Fully thirty years passed before he rose into merited repute, and, even after this, a score of years ^{was} wes spent in literary conflict ere his final reputation was established. Christopher North, of *Blackwood*, and De Quincey, the essayist, are led to rebuke their countrymen, and to praise themselves as a quarter of a century in advance of British criticism in their high appreciation of the worth of Wordsworth. Through all this hostile and malicious fault-finding, the poet of the Lakes remained more

loyal than ever to his sacred trust. At the time when his friends were the least friendly, and his foes the most bitter, he took up the defense of his own productions with all the heroism of a knight. Nor was this all. His temptation to abandon the sphere of verse was not alone from the side of captious judgment, but from the very abundance of his worldly resources and the delights of leisure. Though at one period his circumstances were somewhat reduced, all difficulties soon vanished, and full provision was made for his needs. With all the appliances of luxury at hand, and with rare inducements on the part of the English government to confine his attention to English politics, we see him at Rydal Mount passing a life of modest retiracy and frugality, devoted, as he tells us, "to plain living and high thinking." More than once had he been enticed, as Burns had been, to abandon his poetic work, and had always successfully resisted. Alluding most affectionately to the helpful sympathy of his sister in these personal trials, he writes in "The Prelude":—

"She in the midst of all preserved me still
A poet, made me seek beneath that name,
And that alone, my office upon earth."

In all this the ethical element of the poet's nature was manifest. Poetry was a matter of conscience, as well as of culture, in his view, and he profoundly felt that whoever was called of God to this high ministry of verse was morally bound to prosecute it in the face of all neglect and obstacle.

2. *Its Emotional Character.* This is seen, mainly, in his Human Sympathies. His very theory of poetry took its origin in a broad affection for man as man. Such a conception of the function of poetry would have been utterly foreign to any other than a catholic nature. We can discern at this stage in the history of our poet a most striking resemblance to the favorite bard of the Lowland Scotch. Wordsworth alludes with pleasure to the fact that he can stand upon the top of the peaks of Cumberland and look away to Ellisland—one of the homes of Burns. He expresses deep regret that he had not enjoyed more fully the fellowship of this poet of nature and of man. Each of them had been born and bred in lowly life, and ardently yearned for the good of the people. They aimed in every way to elevate the common classes of society, and especially through their literary work to minister to their highest needs. If in the prosecution of this pur-

pose they excited against them the reproaches of the great and affluent, it was in no sense because they despised the upper orders, but because they honored the lower. Hence the utter falsity of such a view as that to which Devey and others give expression, "that Wordsworth was hampered by themes which cut him off from genuine sympathy with the largest section of humanity; that he turned his back upon the great conservative classes of society; that he scrupulously avoided *respectable* people; that the upper ten thousand were practically worthless to him; that his heart beat in unison with the rustic poor only, at home only among vagrant pedlars and ragged shepherds." This is the extreme of cynicism, and smacks of Grub Street, in its literary flavor. Totally misleading, there is just enough of truth in it to make it plausible and give it currency. It is true that Wordsworth, as Burns, felt more at home among the peasants and the middle classes than among the aristocracy of wealth and position. This is not to concede, however, that he did not accord them their rightful place. His life was devoted to the yeomanry because their needs were greater. Just so long as the privileged classes were true to their privileges they had a staunch

supporter in the person of our author. When, however, the lines began to be too closely drawn, and the doctrine of social caste was exalted beyond measure, then Wordsworth was ever found the zealous advocate of popular rights — the poet of the people. Here we quote from Devey words of truth, though strangely aside from his previous statements, that “Wordsworth designed to erect a poetic temple at the shrine of which the most selfish hearts should be humanized, and a feeling of love ever kept alive between the politically great and the socially defenseless.” This is just what he designed and if, in its execution, he offended the aristocracy by his laudable devotion to the humbler orders of the nation, what is the result of this but to make it all the worse for the aristocracy in their social exclusiveness! “I desire from posterity no other praise,” he says, “than that which may be given me for the way in which my poems exhibit man in his essentially human character and relations.” Hence his aim to exalt the humblest state. Hence his messages of cheer to the sorrowing and suffering. Hence ✓ his discovery of something attractive in objects the most unattractive. In this respect, at least, he was the poet of the Commonalty, and, in order to

reach its innermost heart, he was quite content to abandon the formal diction of the schools, and use "great plainness of speech." It was his aim to construct a body of English poetry on a distinctively popular plane, and suffused with human sympathy.

The question as to whether Wordsworth's poetry may be said to be emotional, apart from that element of feeling which arises from his sympathies with his kind, is still an open one, and not without reason. The more we study the author and his verse, however, the more we are inclined to give him credit for an ever-larger measure of genuine poetic sentiment, and separate him from such purely didactic authors as Dryden, Pope, Akenside, and Rogers. That ethical quality, to which reference has been made, has in itself a decidedly emotional character. His ingenuous devotion to his calling had, also, something of this emotive feature. His view of poetry, and of nature as related to it, may be said to have involved this quality of feeling, and that in such marked degree that Mr. Brooke and other recent critics emphasize his "poetic sensibility." It is true, indeed, that we find nothing in Wordsworth at this point to remind us of those outbursts of tender

passion which mark the correspondence of Schiller and Goethe, of Racine and Pascal, of Cowper and Shelley. There is nothing of the sensuous sentiment of "Lalla Rookh" or of "Don Juan," nor, indeed, of the ever-flowing feeling of Chaucer and Spenser. It would have been quite impossible for him to have written in prose as Swift wrote to Stella, or in poetry as Burns penned his verses to the lassies of the Highlands. There is present, however, in Wordsworth a kind of subdued, inward poetic impulse which is just demonstrative enough to be discernible, and in beautiful keeping with his nature as retiring and pensive. In his references to English womanhood there is nothing that borders upon the impetuous outflow of the feelings of the heart, and yet the most cursory reader can detect the presence of high personal regard and genuine love. So, in his allusions to Coleridge and other literary colleagues, and in his expressed opinions as to the great questions of social reform and the high interests of English poetry. What Mackenzie would call the "Man of Feeling" is undoubtedly visible, and yet more concealed than apparent. A careful perusal of his longer poems, as well as his Ecclesiastical and Descriptive Sketches and

Lyrical Ballads, will serve to reveal what we may term the substantial presence of emotion, and go far to redeem his reputation for an order of verse so matter-of-fact and commonplace as to awaken no response from impassioned natures. ✓

3. *Its Intellectual Character.* There is no stage in the interpretation of Wordsworth's personal and poetic nature where he will better stand the test of close inspection than just here. His type of life, and order of verse were those of the thinker. English critics have termed him, in this sense, a philosopher. Perhaps the one word which will best express the idea at this point is Reflection, in its strictly mental meaning. In this particular he has no superior, and but few rivals, in English letters. Coleridge is nearer to him than any other one, and, had he written as much verse as Wordsworth, would have been still nearer in literary type.

"The outward show of sky and earth,
Of hill and valley, he has viewed.
But impulses of deeper birth
Have come to him in solitude."

The more fully we thus come to understand the real poet behind and beneath his poetry, the more clearly we shall note the absence of the objective

and the ever-active presence of the inward eye. His habit of mind was introspective, rather than excursive or discursive. Even in his poem "The ~~Excursion~~" the method is metaphysical, rather than historical. His very boyhood, as we have seen, was marked by philosophic gravity, as was that of Milton. He was always meditating. He was in love with solitude, and largely because it was congenial to his poetic moods and needs. As the contemplative Shelley, he was often hidden in the very heart of the forest or the hills, thinking, and composing. He was wont to indulge in mental reverie—the study of self, of nature, and of God. When residing at Alfoxden, so peculiar were his habits that the citizens came to regard him as a mysterious visitant to their village. This conviction became at length so decided with them, that when he and Coleridge walked forth together in quiet contemplation, the eye of the government officials was upon them. We can but slightly appreciate the radical change which the poet must have experienced when he left his secluded home for the publicity of academic life at Cambridge. He speaks feelingly when he tells us that "he was not for that hour or that place." Even there, however, scholastic routine and for-

malism could not greatly modify his mental habit, and we still find him studying nature and self rather than books. When publishing his *Descriptive Sketches*, he does it, as he says, to show "that although he gained no honors at the University, he could do something." He meant to say that he had been intently engaged in the study of truth outside the prescribed manuals. So strong is this reflective habit that even in his travels he was developing it. Though a stamp distributor in the employ of the English Government, he never allowed this to interfere with the supreme object of his literary life. How strange and ill-timed must have been his visit to the French capital! The reserved and recluse student was suddenly plunged into the very center of Parisian politics. Had he not been delivered from it all just when he was, his real poetic character might have been materially impaired.

We can readily see that Wordsworth was much more at home in philosophic Germany. He had that quality of meditateness so prominent in the old Teutonic mind. His work was similar to theirs — to sound the depths of man's mental and ethical being. We hear him confessing that the very act of writing was too external and manual

to be agreeable. He found his pleasure in mental composition, leaving it to others to interpret and transcribe. It was in accordance with this same mental habit that we find him possessed of but few books. It is probable that Southey spent as much time over his library in the course of a month as Wordsworth did over his scanty one in years. Even what he did read was rather for the purpose of recreation than for profit. This explains his fondness for fiction and travels. The sources whence he drew his stores and inspiration were internal and concealed. It is thus one of the distinctive features of his poetry that it requires mental sobriety on the part of the reader to understand and enjoy it. As he reads, he feels that here is a deep mental and moral experience into sympathy with which he must, if possible, place himself, in order to the best results. The frivolous and the superficial find nothing here. Hence Wordsworth could never become, as to his thought and general style, the poet of the masses. Light-minded and leisure-loving readers will at once discard him, as indeed they have already done, for something more congenial. Reflective minds, however, will seek and relish such high discourse, and will be all the more repaid the longer they

read him. The author has given us in "The Prelude" a true description of his own character in this regard when, after alluding to men of eloquence and active life, he adds:—

"Others too there are among the walks of homely life
Still higher, men for contemplation formed
Shy and unpracticed in the strife of phrase,
Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power,
The thought, the image and the silent joy.
Words are but under agents in their souls.
When they are groping with their greatest strength
They do not breathe among them."

The power of his poetry lies thus in its ideas — seminal and suggestive. It is, in a true sense, psychological. It is mainly because of the absence of this element, that poetry has come to mean, with so many, mere flights of fancy and superficial musings, with no solid substratum of truth, as if, indeed, it were the product of erratic minds, and written only for readers of a capricious mental habit. Wordsworth has taught us this, if nothing else, that genuine poetry is something more than imagination or sentiment, that it is the expression of thought through these as a medium. It is here, especially, that the signal benefit of this order of verse is seen, in that the poet magnifies the philosophic element throughout; es-

× tablishes a union between the reflective and the impassioned, and redeems the poetic art from the current charge of mental weakness.

Such may be said to be, in brief, the ethical, emotional, and intellectual quality of the poetry of Wordsworth. Each of these three fundamental characteristics is marked by some degree of excellence—sufficiently so to invite and reward the careful study of the critic and the reader, and yet not sufficiently so to satisfy the largest demands of either. We feel, as we read and examine, that something is lacking by the presence of which the influence of the poet would be manifestly increased, and we cannot greatly wonder at the earnest discussion, still in progress, as to just what is, or what is not, the poetical merit of our author.

The question, therefore, arises as to the possible defect or defects of Wordsworth's verse. We believe that the whole truth may be summarily expressed at this point in the one phrase—*Limitation of Power*.

The one quality of high poetic genius which Wordsworth does not possess is *Range of Function, Poetic Prescience and Breadth*. This is

so true that it finds its illustration in each of the spheres of poetic life that we have examined.

The *ethical* character of his verse was strictly ethical, rather than positively Christian. In this respect it was restricted in its province and influence, and obliges the most loyal advocates of the author's work to assume negative ground where all should be outspoken and open.

So as to the *emotional* element. It is, as seen, undoubtedly present, and yet present under prescribed conditions, outside the confines of which it never passes. There is a kind and measure of emotion rarely, if ever, rising to the form of controlling passion. There is genuine sentiment without the presence of all-engrossing fervor and unction. The flow of feeling is not so deep and potent as to be resistless, bearing all before it and, withal, majestic in its movement. We hear none of those surgings of soul which characterize the experience of the chosen few in the realm of verse. Where we expect to find an ever-deepening and ever-widening expression of emotive life, we note a studied reserve. There is too much of the cautious and conventional in all this, so that while we acknowledge some degree of genuine poetic impulse it always reaches its fullest

measure this side of the impassioned and sublime.

As to the *intellectual* feature of the poetry before us, such limitation of function is especially manifest. This narrowness of mental horizon is Wordsworth's main defect. There is not only a subjective, but an individual, element in his poetry, which made it impossible for him to take any higher ground than he did. Had he not spent a large portion of his earlier life under the broadening influence of European travel, this restriction of power would have been still more marked. Wordsworth's most ardent admirers cannot justly call him a many-sided man or poet. In this lack of comprehensiveness and reach is found the sufficient explanation of the undramatic quality of his verse, and his failure to construct an English epic. He was too limited in his gifts and faculties to excel in either of these departments of representative verse. His mental acreage was not spacious, and, hence, "The Prelude" and "Excursion" apart, we have from his pen no extensive product. His genius expanded itself in the form best adapted to its ability. Doing his best poetical work before he was forty, we fail to mark that gradual development of power and result of right expected from the master poet. His limitation, in

fact, was in the sphere of creative capability. He had neither the imagination nor the grasp requisite to real inventive work, nor yet, indeed, that continuity of power absolutely essential to the typical forms of literary art. Hence his want of humor, of the facile and flexible qualities of verse; of adaptation to all classes and circumstances; of range of diction and method—in fine, of intellectual expansion—of genius.

As to Wordsworth's place in English poetry the most diverse opinions have been held. "For our own part," says North, "we believe that Wordsworth's genius has had a greater influence on the spirit of poetry in Britain than any other individual mind," while it is reserved for Mr. Arnold, in his criticism of Emerson, strongly to confirm this opinion as he says, "Wordsworth's poetry is, in my judgment, the most important work done in verse in our language during the present century." On the other hand, Jeffrey and his school ranked him as a third-rate versifier, in which decision Hood, his biographer, substantially concurs.

In each of these deliverances we fail to reach the exact truth. Wordsworth is not the genius which North and Arnold would make him, neither is he the poetic weakling of Hood and the Edin-

burgh critics. He has, in a sense, a place of his own, and, if he must be classified, stands among the first names of England's second grade of poets.

He had too little genius to rank with Shakespeare and Milton; he had far too much to rank with Crabbe and Rogers and Campbell. Nor is this all. It was one of the high aims and results of Wordsworth's work to call attention to the need of natural verse, as distinct from the stilted couplets of the classical school. This he did by his fervent love of natural beauty, by his adoption of the common speech of men, and by his subordination of form to thought. Though not the founder of a new school of poetry, he was, in a sense, its central figure, and did a work, though possible to others, yet never attempted by them. We look in vain, from Cowper to Tennyson, for any one competent to its accomplishment. Coleridge alone had similar poetic instincts and aptitudes, but soon betook himself to prose and philosophy. Shelley and Keats, Southey and Scott, were working on different lines, while one of Wordsworth's most beneficent aims was to present a solemn protest in his verse against the sensuous lines of Moore and Byron.

In the light of such facts, criticism must be

somewhat cautious, lest it overreach itself on the side of depreciation and severity. English poetry, as indeed English literature, could ill spare his name and work. He had a high mission, and may be said worthily to have fulfilled it; nor can his influence as a poet be measured by mere relative position and specific poetic product. He appeared, and was prominent, just when he was needed, and left an impression on behalf of clean and thoughtful poetry that will last as long as our language lasts. Defamed and neglected at first, he came at length to just appreciation. Again allowed to retire for a time into comparative obscurity, literary history strangely repeats itself in that special revival of interest now discernible in all that pertains to his character and work.

While there is in his poetry, as suggested, a something lacking that we greatly need, there is, also, it must be conceded, a something present that we need with equal intensity of desire. It is that something lacking that excludes our poet, with all his excellence, from the innermost circle of English bards; it is that something present that, with all his defects, makes him essential to our literature and our personal culture.

Despite all adverse criticism, all acknowledged

limitation of faculty and function in the man and in the poet, we are still glad to indorse what we read on the tablet above his pew in the little church at Grasmere, "In memory of William Wordsworth, a true philosopher and poet, who, by the special gift and calling of Almighty God, whether he discoursed on Man or Nature, failed not to lift up the heart to Holy Things; tired not of maintaining the cause of the Poor and Simple, and so in perilous times was raised up to be chief minister not only of Noblest Poesy, but of High and Sacred Truth."

VI

TENNYSON'S 'IDYLLS OF THE KING'

EVERY critic of Tennyson raises, at the outset, the question as to the appropriateness of the term "idyll" as used by the poet. Meaning, in its Greek form, a little image or representation, it is then applied to a short, descriptive poem of the lyric order, and especially adapted to pastoral themes. There is no reason, however, why such a poem should not be long as well as short; any more than that the lyric should always take the form of the sonnet, and never that of the extended poem, as "L'Allegro" or "Comus." What Tennyson evidently emphasizes in the poem before us is the quality, or literary type, of the verse, rather than its length—its descriptive, symbolic, or pictorial character, while the term "idyll" that he uses is all the more appropriate, in that the poem is made up of a series, a gallery of word pictures, each in itself being entitled to the name "idyll," applied to the poem as a whole. The name "The Divine Comedy," given by Dante to his celebrated

poem, is far more rightfully open to criticism as to literary adaptation.

1. We notice, first, the *origin* of the poem. This is partly historical and partly traditional. We are taken back at once to the name of the notable Sir Thomas Malory, the Welshman, whose "Morte d'Arthur" was finished in the ninth year of the reign of Edward the Fourth, of England, and based on the legends and traditions gathered up in the French romances of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. There are the so-called Arthurian Legends of Merlin and Tristan, and Lancelot and the Round Table. Malory's work is, of course, a modification or free compilation of the material which he had in hand from these earlier sources in foreign literature; and, yet, it is so well executed that Saintsbury, in his "Specimens of English Prose Style," begins with Malory as rightly entitled to open the illustrious list of English Prose Writers. He speaks of the version as "having caught the whole spirit and beauty of the Arthurian Legends, and as one of the first monuments of accomplished English Prose." His selections open with "The Death of Lancelot." The issue of this work from Caxton's press in 1485, and its immediate and continuous popularity

evinced the esteem in which it was held by scholars and the general public. An edition by Southey, as late in English literary history as 1817, confirms the same opinion as to its comparative merits.

As Malory's version takes us back to the days of Chaucer, we must go still further back to 1138, to the days of the old Welshman, Geoffrey of Monmouth, the idol and the butt of later chroniclers, as he, in turn, takes us back to the fifth and sixth centuries. Be his character what it may, it is well known that at this time King Arthur was a commanding personage in history and legend, the synonym for all the virtues, the representative of the medieval and chivalric, and so portrayed in prose and song down to the days of Malory and Elizabeth.

In this mass of data, as revised and adorned by Malory, Tennyson found the occasion and subject-matter of his poem, bringing to Malory's version a far defter hand than Malory brought to the story of Geoffrey. One of the Idylls, "Geraint and Enid," is taken, as we learn, from the *Mabinogion*, a translation of old Welsh legends, published in 1838. As Malory with Geoffrey and Walter Map, so Tennyson with Malory, took his own way in

the use of material at hand, and, moreover, may be said so thoroughly to have modernized it, as to make it, in a sense, a poem of the present age. Without entering into the precise form and measure of these changes made by the Laureate in the recasting of the story, suffice it to say, that his two leading objects seem to have been to put the story into better artistic shape, by omission, modification, and addition, and to give to it a more pervading ethical purpose, doing here somewhat as Chaucer and Spenser did with the Italian romances which they consulted. He aimed, indeed, so to reconstruct it as to make it somewhat appropriate to the nineteenth century, just as Spenser, in his semi-medieval poem "The Faerie Queene," treats of Elizabeth, Mary Queen of Scots, and Leicester, and the leading historical events of the day. The exception taken by Swinburne and others to the liberties which Tennyson has assumed with Malory would be more timely, were Malory's story, as based on Geoffrey, unmixed historical fact.

2. *The structure or plan* of the poem should next be considered. The poem, as a whole, is made up of twelve distinct parts, corresponding, in this respect, to the twelve books of the

"Æneid" and "Paradise Lost" and the twelve contemplated books of "The Faerie Queene." These twelve Idylls are made up of "The Introduction," under the name of "The Coming of Arthur," and the Conclusion, called "The Passing of Arthur," including, in lines 170-440, "Morte d'Arthur," the first part of the "Idylls" that was composed, appearing in 1842. Between these opening and closing Idylls are the ten Idylls pertaining but indirectly to King Arthur. They are as follows: "The Marriage of Geraint," "Geraint and Enid," "Merlin and Vivien," "Lancelot and Elaine," "Guinevere," "The Holy Grail," "Pelleas and Ettarre," "The Last Tournament," "Gareth and Lynette," "Balin and Balan." It will thus be seen that the time of the poem's preparation runs from 1842, the date of the fragment, "Morte d'Arthur," to 1885, the date of "Balin and Balan," a period, in all, of forty-three years, as compared with the seventeen years of the preparation of "In Memoriam." When critics speak of the "Idylls" as covering "more than half a century" in preparation, reference is made to such a poem as "The Lady of Shalott," published in 1832, as it prefigured the story of Elaine. The poem thus covers the best years of the author's

life and work, and may naturally be expected to embody the best elements of his mental and poetic power.

What Elsdale has called "the growth of the Idylls" is here worthy of note. As already stated, the poem opens in 1842 with "Morte d'Arthur," which the poet calls the Fragment, the eleventh book of a young poet's epic, King Arthur, the remaining books having been destroyed by fire, just as the six closing books of "The Faerie Queene" are supposed by some critics to have been lost. This reference is, of course, to be taken figuratively, as indicating that the author had prospectively in mind the composition of such an elaborate work, without having, as yet, realized it. To him it seemed in a sense as real as if it had been written and published. Several years later, in 1859, the actual development of the poem began in the preparation of four separate Idylls — "Enid," "Vivien," "Elaine," and "Guinevere"; "Enid" being divided into two parts or poems — "The Marriage of Geraint," "Geraint and Enid." In 1869, what is now the Introduction, "The Coming of Arthur," appeared, as also "The Holy Grail," "Pelleas and Ettarre," and what is now

the Conclusion, "The Passing of Arthur," including "Morte d'Arthur," the first fragment.

In 1871, 1872, and 1885, respectively, there appeared the remaining portions — "The Last Tournament," "Gareth and Lynette," and "Balin and Balan," this last Idyll being included in the collection "*Tiresias and Other Poems*."

One of the singular features of the poem as to structure is seen in the fact that the order of original composition is by no means the order of later arrangement, the Introduction appearing in 1869, and the Conclusion in 1869, a portion of it, "The Death of Arthur," having been the first part published, 1842. There is absolute correctness, therefore, in the statement of critics "that he began with the end ('Morte d'Arthur'), and continued with the beginning ('The Coming of Arthur'), and ended with the middle of the story" ("Balin and Balan" and "Gareth and Lynette"). He thus made it evident, that, while he had the entire content of the poem in mind, it was only in the most general way and without any very definite idea as to just how the different sections or Idylls were to stand related to each other and to the poem as a whole.

Hence, the open discussion as to the Unity of

the Idylls, the safest position being, that, while there is enough sequence and symmetry to affirm that the various Idylls have a common idea, and constitute one poem rather than twelve poems, there is, on the other hand, such a freedom of adjustment and commingling of facts and truths, that the principle of unity cannot be pressed to its logical fullness. There is, as Aristotle demands, a beginning, a middle, and an end, but; this said, all is said, while, as already seen, these very parts in their relation to each other, as the poem now stands, do not express the original order of composition.

It is not improbable, moreover, that some portions of the poem, such as "Gareth and Lynette," were afterthoughts, nor is there such an absolute need of each of the twelve parts to complete the supposed unity, that one or more of them could not be spared and the logical unity of the poem be preserved.

Still further, as to poetic structure, the excellence of Tennyson's blank verse as seen in the "Idylls" should be emphasized. Having the benefit of all the preceding use of it by English authors, from the time of Surrey and Milton to his own day, he so brought to the application of it his

own poetic genius and sense of beauty that, as Stedman states it, "it impressed itself upon the English mind as a new and vigorous form of our grandest English measure." It is, moreover, noticeable that his use of it in the earlier portions is superior to that of the later, and this, in part, from the fact that the four Idylls of 1869, taken together, are of such poetic excellence as to have evoked the poet's best ability as a mechanician in verse. Here, as elsewhere, it is evident that the better the poetry is in its essential quality, the better is the external structure that it may be made to assume.

3. We may now inquire as to the *central and subordinate teachings* of the poem.

As to its main teaching, the poet himself has not left us in doubt, as he states it in the "Dedication to the Queen" at the close of the Collection,

"Accept this old, imperfect tale,
New-old, and shadowing Sense at war with Soul."

It is, thus, subjectively, the old and ever-new struggle between the flesh and the spirit, the lower and the higher nature,—the essence of the Pauline doctrine represented in legend and song.

On the objective side, the central truth may be said to be the fortunes of King Arthur and his

knights; the glory, decline, and downfall of the Round Table, its dissolution and ruin being caused by the grievous sin of Queen Guinevere in her relation to Lancelot. It is to this external teaching that the poet especially refers at the opening of the "Idylls," as he dedicates them to the memory of Prince Albert the Good, and consoles the sorrowing queen by comparing him to Arthur, the ideal knight. Critics have spoken of this dominant teaching under various forms; as, "Man's conflict with sin and fate," as the protest in man against the supremacy of the bestial; as the mission of man to his fellows, or, in the words of Elsdale, "as one long study of failure." Whatever the form, the primal principle is the same, and makes the poem a great object-lesson on the Philosophy of Life,—its evil and good, its rewards and punishments.

Closely connected with this central teaching are others of subordinate, and yet important, interest; such as, the poet's lofty ideal of womanhood, given us in "Enid" and "Elaine"; his devotion to the beauty of the natural world, as seen in Lynette's spontaneous outbursts to stars and sun and birds and flowers; the vanity of fame and wealth; the mighty power of evil in the soul and

in the world; the sureness of Nemesis to the guilty; the temptations of youth and manhood and old age; the evil workings of suspicion, as in Geraint's attitude toward Enid; passion and retribution, as in "Elaine"; the glory of fidelity to simple duty, as in "The Holy Grail," and so on from one teaching to another through the series as a whole. ✓

In fine, we see here a great ethical or meditative poem, evincing all that variety of truth which naturally belongs to so profound and fruitful a topic in the hands "of one who is aware of the profound realities . . . lying everywhere beneath the visible surface of things in this world." Dr. van Dyke has gathered up, in an interesting way, "A List of Biblical Allusions and Quotations in the Works of Tennyson." Not a few of these are from the "*Idylls*"; so much so as to give to the poem a decidedly devout tone, and make its final purpose conducive to the development of conscience and character. It is, in fact, one of the distinctive merits of the poem, that the author has taken this confused mass of earlier legend and conjecture, and, on the basis of it, constructed a poem of an elevated order. There is a sense in which, in this particular, there is a strong re-

semblance in the final purpose of the "Idylls" and of "The Faerie Queene." Just as Spenser aimed to set forth the character and life of an English gentleman in the most exalted meaning of the term, for a pattern to the youth of England, so Tennyson has pictured an "ideal knight," if so be English youth might be stimulated thereby to high endeavor and worthy living. Here, also, the "Idylls" and "In Memoriam" agree, in that, with all their many differences, they exalt the supremacy of truth and right and justice and love: the triumph of beauty over the beast; the incoming of the kingdom of God; the final triumph of the Son of man.

4. We are now prepared to note the *characteristics or salient features* of Style, Method, Scope, and Content, by which the "Idylls" are best judged, and through which they have obtained that place in English letters which they may now be said to hold.

(a) First of all, the *diction* of the poem is noteworthy. Tennyson's English in this poem, as elsewhere, has evoked the highest eulogium of all literary critics; so that the text of such a work would form a good basis for the study of poetic

usage, and reveal the wealth of the English language in this regard.

We may view the subject in several phases. There is, for example, a pronounced Old English element in the "Idylls." G. C. Macaulay, in his study of "Gareth and Lynette," has called the attention of students to this, remarking that the poet, in this respect, followed Spenser as Spenser followed Chaucer, using such words as "ruth" and "clomb," "bought," in the sense of "fold," and "worship," in the sense of "honor," carrying out, thus, the general method of the Elizabethan writers, as indicated by Abbott and others. The use of such terms as "increscent" and "decescent" exhibits a strict etymological sense. The simplicity and strength of Tennyson's English are thus among its notable features, seen not only in his preference for shorter words and native words, but in his selection, among foreign words themselves, of the simplest forms and those most akin to the vernacular. So manifest is this, that it may be clearly confirmed by a minute examination of separate idylls and sections taken almost at random. A writer in the *Edinburgh Review* has given us the results of such an examination of one hundred lines from different poems, comparing the percent-

age of foreign, and, especially, Latin words, with that found in other writers, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, and Wordsworth. The result is reached, that Tennyson ranks with Chaucer and Shakespeare in the nativeness of his diction, secured, on his part, by a definite purpose to keep within the lines of his own speech, and thus reveal what could be done therein. Here and there, it is true, there is noticeable a peculiar usage of words, purely Tennysonian, of words obsolete and obsolescent, or of words and phrases in special senses. Thus, the word "spate," in "Gareth and Lynette," meaning "flood-water," and "wit," in the sense of "knowledge." Thus, the phrase "made it spire to heaven," spoken of Merlin. So, in the same poem,

"Oilily bubbled up the mere."

So, in the scene between Tristram and Iseult, it is said:—

"And after these had *comforted* the blood."

In these and similar passages, the poet insists, and rightly, that the departure from the established usage is exceptional, and justified on the grounds of variety and poetic interest. He is here in harmony with other poets.

The alliteration of his verse is apparent on every page; so much so that it would appear to be an essential part of the poet's poetic nature and method, often carried, it must be conceded, to the extreme of studied effort and mechanism. Thus, in "Gareth and Lynette":—

"And tallest, Gareth, in a showerful spring
Stared at the spate. A slender-shafted pine
Lost footing, fell, and so was whirled away."

Again, in "Enid":—

"But when a rumor rose about the Queen,
Touching her guilty love for Lancelot."

So, of Arthur:—

"There on a day he sitting high in hall,
Before him came a forester of Dean,
Wet from the woods."

So, in "Elaine":—

"Lightly, her sult allowed, she slept away,
And while she made her ready for her ride,
Her father's latest words humm'd in her ear."

So regular, indeed, is the alliteration, that a large number of lines may be chosen in which the Old English formula of sub-letters and chief letters is exactly carried out; as, in "Gareth and Lynette":—

"And then, when turning to Lynette, he told
The tale of Gareth."

Tennyson's compound epithets are, also, a striking feature of the Diction, special attention being called by van Dyke to a similarity of usage here of Tennyson and Milton. Thus we note, "autumn-dripping," "tip-tilted," "many-knolled," "ruby-circled," "gloomy-gladed," "silver-misty," "princely-proud," "crag-carven," "ever-higher-ing," "tourney-falls," "kitchen-knives," "life-bubbling," "wan-sallow," "Lent-lily," "co-twisted," and so on—a feature common to Tennyson and Homer, Spenser and Swinburne.

In fine, the diction, as the style, is marked by what Swinburne has called "synthetic perfection," by a choice selection and use of words, by beauty of form and a due relation of sound to sense, by the specifically artistic or architectural side of verse; so that all is resonant and rhythmic, pleasing to the ear and taste and every cultivated sense. ✓

(b) Attention should be called to the *dramatic element* in the Idylls. The poem cannot consistently be said to be a drama, as Elsdale has termed it, certainly not in the sense in which "Harold" and "Queen Mary" are such; but it has, from first to last, a dramatic cast and purpose, with here and there distinct dramatic passages. Though

the poem is not presented in the regular form of acts and scenes, and though not histrionic in its character, it has definite dramatic and scenic features.

This appears especially in the personages and scenes brought vividly to view; as, Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere, the three leading dramatic personæ, to whom must be added Enid, Elaine, Vivien, Tristram, Pelleas, Ettarre, Gareth and Lynette, Bedivere, Sir Bevis Isolt and Dagmet, the seneschal and the sons, Gawain and Modred. Here we have characters and types of character; high and low, innocent and crafty; playing each a part, and together contributing to the sum-total of the effect of the Play as a vivid presentation of human life.

So, as to Scenes; such as the Coronation Scene in "The Coming of Arthur"; the Oriel Scene, in "Elaine"; the Diamond Scene and Castle of Astolat; the Conferences of Guinevere and Lancelot, especially the last, in "Guinevere"; the Parting Scene between Arthur and Guinevere; the Ghost of Gawain, as it appears to Arthur sleeping, and calls aloud; the Battle Scene, in "The Passing of Arthur," and so on, till the visions disappear.

In these and other respects, there is here seen

an abundance of dramatic material, though not in dramatic form, the poet's limitations being thus evinced, as in his "Promise of May" and "The Cup and the Falcon." His forte was not here; and yet that criticism is certainly astray which insists that we have in the "Idylls" no conspicuous dramatic element.

(c) Another marked feature of the Idylls is seen in the *happy combination* of the medieval and the modern, the old and the new, the mythical and the real. The vexed question as to just in what sense and to what degree the "Idylls" may be called an Allegory need not detain us. Those critics are wrong who say that the poem is virtually a Parable, or that it is in all its parts and meanings allegorical. This element is undoubtedly present, and the skill of the poet lies in the fusion of the symbolic and real without their confusion. The central personage, Arthur, illustrates the principle, in that it is still an open question among critics whether he was a real Celtic character or merely a symbol of heroism and virtue in the early age. That old Geoffrey of Monmouth believed him to be a historic personality is by no means sufficient evidence; while in him, as in the other characters, we feel, as we read, that we

are dealing with something more than the visionary and phenomenal.

This skill in combination is especially seen in the way in which the poet puts the thoughts and feelings of the nineteenth century into the language of the sixth, twelfth, and fourteenth centuries. Romance and reality; knights, lords, and ladies, meet and interchange ideas with the modern thinker. The literal and the figurative alternate, and we pass without a warning from Faery Land and joust and tournament to Cheapside and the Strand and Temple Bar.

In all this the poet has subjected himself, as we know, to severe criticism, and, in some respects, justly, as being guilty of anachronism, and double-dealing with words; and yet we must emphasize the fact, that such combinations in their best form are a mark of poetic genius, and in the "Idylls" are presented with unwonted skill.

(d) The *lyric excellence* of the Idylls should be noted. The author calls the earliest portion of the poem, "Morte d'Arthur," a fragment of an epic of King Arthur; and still the battle rages among the critics, as to whether the "Idylls" constitute an epic, and, if so, in what sense; whether the author at first so planned the poem, or whether it

was an afterthought, or whether, perchance, the poem unwittingly assumed an epic form. When we note that there is a hero; that it is true, as has been said, "that no language has surpassed in epic dignity the English of these poems"; that they have "epic singleness of movement," and are "an admirable example of the grand style,"—this is not to say that the poem is an epic, but that it is epical, as it is dramatic, having the heroic tone and quality and effect, but not the epic type and structure. As to the lyric element, however, all doubt disappears. From first to last, this is a dominant feature; so much so, that a volume of English lyrics might be gathered from these twelve Idylls, on the basis of which lyric verse might be studied both as an inspiration and an art. Hence the just comparison made by Stedman between Tennyson and Theocritus; as, also, by van Dyke, between Tennyson and Milton. Hence the correctness of the judgment, that the "Idylls" are lyric, rather than philosophic or creative, full of idyllic and descriptive sweetness, and representing in numerous passages the highest reach of poetic art in these directions.

The "Idylls" are not without their faults. From their first appearance, critics have not been

slow to note them. Taine compares Tennyson with De Musset, to the advantage of the latter. "Mr. Tennyson," writes another, "has no sound pretensions to be called a great poet." Swinburne takes strong exceptions, at many points, to the "Idylls," the "Morte d'Albert," as he calls them, objecting especially to Arthur as the central character. Devey, in his "Modern English Poets," continues the adverse comment; while Elsdale, in his "Studies," devotes a chapter to the anachronisms in the "Idylls," and to what he calls their "Drawbacks and Defects." His exceptions are all included in the one sweeping comment, that they exhibit lack of breadth, accretion rather than growth. He insists that they are fragmentary; that the allegory is partial; that the characters are inconsistent; that the conception of character is superficial, and that episodes and digressions mar the unity of the work.

More justly, it may be said, the great defects of the poem are want of epic and dramatic grasp and of profound and soul-moving passion. The defect of the "Idylls" is the signal defect of Tennyson's poetic work as a whole, "In Memoriam" excepted,—the subordination of the poet to the artist; the supremacy, as in Macaulay in

prose, of the antithetic. Just as Macaulay did not hesitate to modify an idea in order to construct an antithesis, so Tennyson often modified an idea to construct an alliteration or a verbal harmony. He is a master of words in poetry, a literary architect, and herein lies the open question of his prospective fame as transient or permanent. No one of his poems represents as clearly and fully as the "Idylls" his merits and limitations. It is because of the pronounced character of the latter that the "Idylls" must give place to "In Memoriam," while it is because of the pronounced character of the former that the "Idylls" must be called his second great poem. An able critic is not far astray when he writes, "that the mind of Tennyson is of a somewhat feminine type." It is not possessed of masculinity in the sense of original force and scope. Hence, the superiority of his female characters, and, hence, the prominent excellence of the more subdued qualities of literary style, such as grace, finish, symmetry, propriety, charm of word and manner, and general æsthetic attraction.

Tennyson is a gracious presence in literature, but not a force, as Goethe, Milton, and Emerson are forces. His gifts are rare, but not plenary

and potent. His passion is pure, but not profound and elemental, nor the effect of his work upon us reorganizing and irresistible.

We reverted, at the outset, to the propriety of his use of the word "idylls," and herein the poet made a safe estimate of his own gift and range.

Odes and sonnets, ballads, elegies, and idylls are the staple of his art, and mark his scope. When we speak of "The Princess" as an epic, and of "Harold" as a drama, it is by way of verbal accommodation, and in deference to the general merits of the author.

It is, indeed, Tennyson's "In Memoriam" that has made it possible to assign him to a higher rank than any of his other poems would justify. This poem is, in every sense, great, and marks the master; so great, indeed, in connection with the "Idylls," as to give a higher place to all his work and, despite his faults of mind and art, make it possible to assign him among England's Immortals in the field of letters.

As the years go on, his name and fame are widening; so that, whatever may be the special estimate of his genius or his work, as compared with that of his contemporaries, he may be said to be the most unique, conspicuous, and indis-

pensable poet of the Victorian Age. To have written "In Memoriam" and "Idylls of the King" is enough to make an author permanently famous. There is, therefore, a high sense in which, in view of modern poetic tendencies, we may say of Tennyson as Wordsworth sang of Milton:—

"Thou shouldst be living at this hour.
England hath need of thee."

VII

TENNYSON'S "IN MEMORIAM"

THERE are few readers of Tennyson who, if compelled to select one of his poems to the exclusion of all others, would not choose the "In Memoriam" as the most representative single production. Whatever praise may rightfully be accorded to the "Idylls of the King," to "Maud," to "The Princess," or to "Becket" as the best of his dramas, this magnificent threnody is so comprehensive and vital, so full of mind and soul and art and suggestion, that it stands alone, and unapproachably alone, among the poems of the author and among those of any of his contemporaries.

It is, in fact, a poem so much greater than the theme of it, or the sad event that suggested and inspired it, ~~that there is almost an incongruity in the contrast, and the wonder increases, upon every renewed reading of it,~~ that such a work of thought and feeling could have been based upon a foundation so limited and local. Our purpose in the

study of this poem will best be subserved by noting, with some degree of regularity, the various topics of interest that arise as we peruse and examine it.

1. As to its *occasion*. This is a matter of historical fact; and is found, as we know, in the death of Arthur Henry Hallam, the poet's college companion and intimate personal friend. His death at Vienna, September 15, 1833, marks the actual origin as well as the occasion of the poem, inasmuch as it was in this year that Tennyson began its composition, not completing it fully until seventeen years after, the year 1850, the middle year of the century, and the forty-first of the author's long and illustrious career. It is thus that he calls it an Elegy, while it is also a Eulogy, as he reiterates and impresses the varied virtues of his beloved Arthur; taking occasion, thereby, to exalt the personal qualities of all true characters in every age and clime. As already suggested, such an event as this, the untimely death of a college friend, would scarcely seem a fitting theme for so elaborate a production, and seems like magnifying one of the most ordinary incidents of our every-day life into a place of undeserved prominence; and yet the poet deals with the theme,

both in its local and universal character, as a specific event of sorrow in his personal history as a man, and, also, as a general event of historic character in the developing history of men. The death of the gifted Hallam is thus but the text of a broad and thoroughly elaborated system of truth—a fact in life and providence and human history awakening attention to a thousand other related and wider-reaching facts—a germinal idea or principle whose prolific fruitage is as undying as it is abundant.

Just as the "Idylls of the King" grew from small beginnings to spacious proportions as a poem of epic range, so did the death of Hallam occasion the author's greatest poem; the most notable elegy of the English tongue or of modern literature, and one of the representative poems of the literary world.

2. As to its *structure*, we note that it is made up of one hundred and thirty sections, exclusive of the Prologue and Epilogue, containing in all seven hundred and twenty-four stanzas, of the peculiar Tennysonian order, the quatrain, with its rhyme of the first and fourth lines, and of the second and third.

Throughout the poetry of Tennyson, various or-

ders of verse are found — blank verse, as in his “Harold,” and other dramas, in the “Idylls of the King,” and “Enoch Arden,” “The Princess,” and others of the longer poems; the couplet, as in “The May Queen” and “Locksley Hall”; the three-line stanza, as in “The Two Voices”; the quatrain, as in “The Palace of Art,” “The Talking Oak”; the six-line stanza, as in “The Sisters”; the seven-line stanza, as in “Fatima”; the eight-line stanza, as in “The Miller’s Daughter”; the twelve-line stanza, as in “Mariana”; while in so short a poem as “Eleänore” the stanzas vary from the minimum of nine lines to the maximum of twenty-four lines, in which a large variety of combinations is expressed.

The peculiar quatrain of “In Memoriam,” however, is Tennyson’s own, as much as the Spenserian stanza of “The Faerie Queene” is Spenser’s, used here by him in its best form and made by its use an historic English stanza.

Here and there, outside of “In Memoriam,” Tennyson employs it, as in his significant lines to the Queen, in 1851:—

“Revered, beloved—O you that hold
A nobler office upon earth
Than arms, or power of brain or birth
Could give the warrior kings of old,

"Victoria, — since your Royal grace
To one of less desert allows
This laurel greener from the brows
Of him that uttered nothing base."

So, in the poems entitled "The Blackbird" and "To J. S.," written in the earlier years, and others.

Further, as to structure, it may be stated, that critics and commentators have gone to the extreme either of denying any unity of plan in the poem, or to that of reducing it to a close and technical, logical analysis, as if it had been so divided according to the canons of the schools.

Professor Genung, in his interesting study of the poem, falls into the latter extreme, and gives us an elaborate plan of Prologue, First, Second, and Third Cycles, and Epilogue, stating the specific stanzas that belong, as he thinks, to the respective divisions. In fact, more than one-half of his book is taken up with the statement and attempted proof of his theory, so that, in not a few instances, he is compelled to adopt forced analyses in order to reach such a result. He even goes so far as to suggest, that the poet gives us in the poem the hint of his own plan that we are to discover and unfold. This, to our mind, is not only impossible to find, but undesirable.

In order to the fullest enjoyment and understanding of the poem, as well as to the fullest expression of its poetical character, all that is needed is, to bear in mind its definite occasion, its general order of thought and form, and the double purpose, specific and general, which it is intended to subserve.

In fact, even the general method of it is often at fault, if we press closely the claims of logical rule, in that topics once treated are reintroduced, and in that additional stanzas were composed after the poem had been subsequently written. This afterthought could not have been in the original plan, so called, while the manner in which such stanzas adjust themselves to the general object of it shows that any such principle as a logical nexus was absent, and that the author wrote what he wrote on a comprehensive and flexible method.

In this respect, the poem is in keeping with the "Idylls of the King," the parts of which were composed at different periods, and to the latest critics still present the open question as to how little and how much sequence and logical connection exists, and as to just what the author's plan and aim may be said to have been. The poet himself never saw fit to solve these questionings,

which in itself is but an additional proof that he preferred to leave the matter of method to itself.

The actual content or subject-matter of the poem is the best answer as to what it is and what it is designed to teach.

3. If we thus inquire as to the *purpose* of the poem, the best general answer is, that it is an attempt to state and solve the problem of life — as life is inseparably connected with death and destiny and immortality. Professor Genung prefers to state it in the form of a proposition, "Love is Intrinsically Immortal." This he calls the "fundamental idea" of the poem, as expressed in the first stanza,

"Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove."

We revert, however, to the purpose stated — the attempt to examine and solve the problem of life, as it presented itself to the poet's mind. This includes the doctrine of Immortal Love and others equally and more important,—those of man's origin and history and destiny; his hopes and fears; his joys and sorrows and struggles; his victories and reverses; his successes and disap-

pointments; his relation to God and the world and the eternal life beyond.

It is here that the poem sweeps out beyond the local and temporal into the immensities and infinities, and embraces, as Dante's "Divina Commedia," the confines of heaven, earth, and hell.

The poem is thus essentially inquisitive and interrogative. It investigates phenomena, scientific and religious, if so be it may come at length to the disclosure of the hidden truth, the resolution of the complex problem, the successful finding of the way. The question of Pilate to Christ is the question of the poet — What is Truth? only asked and presented in the reverential spirit and, therefore, with the promise of an approximate solution. In the course of this inquiry, manifold questions and teachings arise — as to the transientness of all things human; as to the folly of ambition and worldly preferment; as to the depressing effects of sorrow, and the mission of the divine discipline; as to the blessedness of friendship, and the moral relation of the present to the future. It is, in fine, "this search for reality" that constitutes the purpose as well as the inestimable value of the *Elegy* — an earnest, and often an intensely passionate, attempt to reach foundations, and mark the lim-

its of truth and things; to discover certainty amid ceaseless change, and "justify the ways of God to man." "In Memoriam" is Tennyson's Essay on Man, with a deeper meaning and a wider purpose than belonged to the poem of Pope, and a representation of Victorian England as that was of Augustan.

4. This last statement naturally calls to mind the *relation* of "In Memoriam" to the *age* in which it was produced. Stedman speaks of it as "an eminently British poem, in scenery, imagery, and general treatment." In this sense, it is national as well as universal. More specifically, it is a poem of nineteenth-century England, as distinct from any preceding period, as much so as Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" was a picture of fourteenth-century England, or Addison's *Spectator* that of the Age of Anne. There is a sense, moreover, in which all antecedent English thought and life, from the days of Elizabeth to Victoria, had accumulated and expressed itself in this closing century, the individual life of the century itself being added thereto, and being, as the latest factor, the most impressive and vital. It was in 1809, just as the century had fairly opened, that Tennyson was born. Beginning his great Elegy in the

third decade, its completion is coterminous with the close of the first half of the century, and may be said, in time and character, to mark the high tide of the nation's thought and life. It was a time when scientific research, after the modern method, was taking on its positive and pronounced forms. Metaphysicians and theologians, stimulated by Continental thinkers, were speculating, as never before in England, on the great questions of philosophy and ethics. English politics and the English church were alike stirred to the center.

It was now, as historians have been quick to note, that such representative men as Dr. Arnold and Frederic Robertson, Maurice and Newman, and the leading exponents of the great Oxford movement were agitating, in their own way, the fundamental questions of state and church and human life. The great English writers of the time in Fiction, Miscellany, History, and Sociology were doing phenomenal work, while Thackeray and Carlyle protested against the imposing frauds of the era, whatever their guise or name or sanctions.

As Matthew Arnold and Browning, so Tennyson, aimed to reach and disclose the deepest instincts of the age, and thus to make his poem but

a reflex of his nation's thought. There is a sense, therefore, in which, as we read this *Elegy*, we seem to see the faces of Keats and Shelley, Coleridge and Wordsworth, Southey and Scott, Morris and Clough, and all the cardinal characteristics of the period. It was Tennyson's aim and high vocation to gather up and express in verse, as he only could do it, the prevailing ideas and feelings of these epoch-making minds, and with them all to express his own profoundest self. It is thus historically as well as poetically just to answer the question propounded, as to whether or not Tennyson is a great poet, in the words in which a recent American critic has answered it, by saying, "That will depend on whether you think the nineteenth century is a great century, for he is the clearest, sweetest, and strongest voice of the century."

So true is this that Tennyson, in so far as we can see, would have been a poet out of place in the Augustan, and even in the Elizabethan Age, and, if, indeed, out of his own epoch far more at home in the ever-developing civilization of the twentieth century than in the conservative history of the eighteenth. In his second "*Locksley Hall*," as in the "*In Memoriam*," his eye often peers be-

yond the limits of the present age, and looks far on into the century just at hand.

5. As to the *relation* of "In Memoriam" to *other poems*, something may be said. If the question of time of composition is taken into account, we note, that, the poems published before 1833 apart, the first collection closely connected with the Elegy was that published in 1842 under the title "Poems by A. Tennyson," in which such pronounced examples as "Ulysses," "Locksley Hall," "The Two Voices," and "Morte d'Arthur" appeared. Then followed, previous to 1850, "The Princess" in 1847, it being noticeable that, in 1850, the year of the publication of "In Memoriam," there occurred the marriage of the poet to Miss Sellwood, and his appointment, as the successor of Wordsworth, to the English Poet Laureateship, which he held to the day of his death, in 1892. The year 1850 thus marks the completion of the first half of his life, the second half being co-terminous with the possession of the Laureateship.

It is natural to infer, therefore, that many of these antecedent poems, between 1833 and 1850, were more or less preparative to this one consummate work, as Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" shows the preparative influence of his earlier work.

Especially is this presumable in reference to the poems of 1842; "The Two Voices" being, perhaps, as significant as any in this historic and literary sequence.

The opening three-line stanza indicates its character:

"A still small voice spake unto me,
'Thou art so full of misery,
Were it not better not to be?'"

So, the sixth,

"I said, 'When first the world began,
Young Nature thro' five cycles ran,
And in the sixth she moulded man.'"

So, later,

"And men, thro' novel spheres of thought
Still moving after truth long sought,
Will learn new things when I am not."

So, on through the poem, we are reminded of the reflective lines of the Elegy seeking after the light and the truth and the solution of the pressing problems of time and eternity.

If this relation of the Elegy to Tennyson's other work, preceding and subsequent, be examined apart from the principle of time, and mainly with reference to those poems that breathe the same

spirit and seek the same ends, the subject will assume a wider and fuller form.

Referring, at this point, to van Dyke's sixfold classification of Tennyson's poems, (1) *Melodies and Pictures*; (2) *Stories and Portraits*, including *Ballads, Idylls, and Character-Pieces*; (3) *Epics*; (4) *Dramas*; (5) *Patriotic and Personal Poems*; (6) *Poems of the Inner Life*, including those of *Art, Life, Love, Death, Doubt and Faith*,—this last division, "*Poems of the Inner Life*," would almost, without exception, indicate the line of thought in the *Elegy*, particularly those dealing with *Doubt and Faith*, such as, "*The Higher Pantheism*," "*Vastness*," "*De Profundis*," and "*Crossing the Bar*"; while others, such as "*The Vision of Sin*," "*My Life is full of Weary Days*," "*Love and Death*," suggest the same great truths and questions. So, in each of the other five categories, pertinent examples may be found; as in "*Nothing will Die*," "*All Things will Die*," "*The Death of the Old Year*," "*A Farewell*," "*A Dirge*," "*Ode to Memory*," "*Far, Far Away*," "*The Golden Year*," "*Despair*," and the two *Locksley Halls*.

It is thus that "*In Memoriam*" may be seen to stand as a poem midway in the author's work, as

midway in his life, looking before and after, expressing in most fitting form what had been and what was yet to be expressed, though in less effective manner, and thus concentrating in one supreme effort all the best qualities and tendencies of the author's genius.

It is for this reason, if for no other, that it may be called the poet's most representative work, as it is his richest and greatest—the one that could least be spared from the large volume of verse which he has written. The relation of "In Memoriam" to "Paradise Lost," as of Tennyson to Milton, is a difficult question and has been fully discussed by an acute American critic.

6. We may now turn to one or two of the more specific *characteristics* and *qualities* of this poem.

And, first, as to its *poetic form* or *type*. The author has distinctly called it an Elegy, while the nature of the theme, as well as that of the method, sentiment, and purpose, would so indicate. Thus, critics, such as Genung and Davidson, have sought to establish close parallelisms between it and other English elegies, notably, Milton's "Lycidas" and Shelley's "Adonais," and the autobiographical sonnets of Shakespeare. In so far as each

is an elegy, "In Memoriam," "Lycidas," and "Adonais"; in so far as each refers to the loss, on the author's part, of a beloved personal friend, of Hallam and Edward King and Keats, the comparison may be said to hold; while the Sonnets of the great dramatist also point to his sincere affection for some unnamed friend. Here, however, is the limit of the resemblance, while in comprehensiveness of plan, in imaginative outlook, in range of power, and intrinsic poetic quality, the Laureate's dirge is so incomparably superior to any other elegy of our language that any attempt to institute extended likeness is as invidious as it is impracticable. Emerson's "Threnody" over the loss of his son, or his "In Memoriam" over the loss of his brother, or Arnold's lament of Clough in his "Thyrsis" are suggestive and beautiful poems, but can with no more justice be brought into favorable comparison with the Elegy upon Hallam than can Tennyson's "Harold," or "Queen Mary" be closely compared with "Julius Caesar" or "Richard III."

It may be noted, further, as to Form, that "In Memoriam," being specifically elegiac, is essentially a lyric, and would thus take its place among the poems of the author's first collection of 1830,

"Poems, Chiefly Lyrical." Devoid of anything like a distinctive dramatic type, it has not enough of the epic or heroic element to modify its general lyric character, while the nature of the theme and the prevalence of deep emotion would constitute it of the lyric order.

The external form of "*In Memoriam*" apart, its most striking feature is its masterly combination of the intellectual and artistic, so that each is expressed in appropriate measure and manner, and each is made to contribute to the highest excellence of the other. It is questionable whether such a fusion is so fully effected in any other English poem — certainly not in "*Paradise Lost*," nor in Pope's "*Essay on Man*," nor in Browning's "*Ring and the Book*," nor in Longfellow's "*Evangeline*." In each of these, one characteristic, the mental or artistic, is conspicuously prominent over the other, nor would it be aside from the truth to suggest, that the author's "*Idylls of the King*" is the closest approximation to his own ideal established in the *Elegy*.

What Dowden calls the "mind and art" of Shakespeare is here seen in Tennyson. When Bagehot speaks of the "ornate art" of Tennyson, intimating that it is lacking in the mental quality,

and is ornate only, however just the criticism may be as applied to other poems, it has no valid illustration in the *Elegy*. Here there is seen artistic unity, the unity of art and nature; of idea and form; of thought and feeling and taste; in such a masterly manner that we view them as one and the same thing in the sum-total of the effect that the poem has upon us.

In other words, "In Memoriam" represents the union of poetry and philosophy, and in a way superior to that of any of its poetic contemporaries. Herein lies one of the author's chief claims to a precedence over Robert Browning, in that where Browning deals with the intellectual only, Tennyson has presented the intellectual in vital union with the æsthetic.

It is one of the impressions ever deepening as we read "In Memoriam," that we are reading an author who is a master of thought and imagination as well as of words and meters, and the question starts ever anew, as we read a stanza, which is the greater, the depth and reach of its ideas, or the exquisite finish of its construction. We read:—

"Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they."

"I held it truth with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things";

and, as we read, we are instructed and enchanted, for we have found a thinker and a bard in one, and, in so far as "*In Memoriam*" is concerned, the thinker is always present. We may allude here to a possible and tenable criticism of Tennyson in the love of art for art's sake, in the undue emphasis of the elaborative and decorative, but the criticism does not hold in the poem with which we are dealing, nor, we may add, does it hold to any marked degree in the longer poems, but chiefly in the shorter miscellaneous lyrics, as in "*Lilian*" and "*Madeline*" and "*The Ballad of Oriana*" and odes and songs.

Mention has been made, in speaking of the subject-matter of "*In Memoriam*," that it deals with the most vital and profound problems of the day, and, in doing this, it is necessarily a thoughtful and a philosophic poem. It could not be other and be successful. The seventeen years spent in its preparation would indicate this. The evident manner of the poet as sedate and serious indicates it. He had written snatches of song and lighter

lyrics and playful verses on life and love—"Claribel" and "Isabel," "The Sea-Fairies" and "The Mermaid," "The Miller's Daughter" and "The May Queen," "The Day Dream" and "The Beggar Maid"; but now every faculty was at its fullest, every sober purpose was in exercise, imagination stirred to its sublimest function, and the poet's whole nature was lifted in Miltonic manner "to the height of his great argument." As a result, we have a poem instinct with thought and life and lofty ideals, and developed with all the grace and charm of poetic art,—a philosophy of man in finished verse,—a presentation of idea and expression thoroughly unique and Tennysonian, and evincing to all less gifted souls what the possibilities of poetry are and how a genius in song may think aloud in verse. The relation of the poem to man is one of the additional features of "In Memoriam." This indeed is a characteristic of Tennyson's poetry as a whole, as clearly evinced in the first collection which he published with his brother in 1826, as in "Demeter and Other Poems," published in 1889.

This, apart, however, there are some of his poems that evince this personality more fully than others; such as, "The Idylls," "Enoch Arden,"

"Maud," "Dora," "A Dream of Fair Women," "Godiva," and many of those Character-Pieces and Poems on Love and Doubt and Destiny to which attention has been called.

"*In Memoriam*" however, stands out, to our mind, conspicuously prominent over all others in this respect. It is the most representative poem of the author, as it is of the age, more Tennysonian than any other, and one which an unprejudiced reader would most naturally select as Tennyson's, rather than Browning's or Swinburne's or even Matthew Arnold's. Mr. Howells has spoken of a feature which he terms "Tennysonianism." It is this which is here so visible that no one can mistake it; seen, partly, in the external structure and character of the poem, in stanza and rhythm and artistic beauty, but, more manifestly, in the intrinsic qualities of it, in its underlying sentiments, thoughts and ideals, and what may be called the genius of the poem.

The progress of the poem from 1833 to 1850 may be said to record the progress of the poet's mind during these seventeen memorable years. The very continuousness of its preparation made it a part of his own being and literary life. It was in his heart and thought as a growing entity until

the fullness of time came for its appearance. Hence, the attempt made by some critics to institute a comparison between "In Memoriam" and Shakespeare's Sonnets, on the basis of their common autobiographical element, not only because each is written in the memory of a loved and lost friend, but because of the intense beauty and tenderness of the poems.

However this may be, "In Memoriam" is a revelation of the author's personality as well as a memorial of his friend.

Not a few of the stanzas are so lifelike that we can almost hear the poet say, This is my experience and my trust; this, my joy and my hope; and this, my faith and doubt.

Thus as he writes:—

"I sometimes hold it half a sin
To put in words the grief I feel;
For words, like nature, half reveal
And half conceal the soul within,"

we see in characteristic connection the sorrow over the death of young Hallam; the enunciation of a general principle as to the relation of feeling to utterance, and, also, his own state of mind as he pens the quatrain. This frequent repetition of the I, so notable in the poem, is far from egoistic

but thoroughly natural, as the expression of the author's own state of mind.

And this leads us to note, in closing, that the special feature of "*In Memoriam*," as of Tennyson's best poetry, is its latent meaning, ever alluring the literary student to new investigations, and ever promising as his reward new discoveries of truth and beauty. Next to Shakespeare's plays, this poem must be ranked, in its suggestiveness or undeveloped thought. No one can read it or enjoy it without a kind of Hebraic sobriety of mind, and no one can rise from its reading without being stronger in mental vigor and possibility.

It is not at all strange that Tennyson wrote nothing better afterwards, in that here he may be said to have surpassed himself in range and imagination, and, in later years, but reiterated and reflected the essential excellencies of this masterpiece.

No poem has so permeated and suffused modern English verse. Tennyson, it is said by the critics, has founded a school or method of verse, and this is true; but in such a superb production as this he has done something better — he has expressed, in artistic oneness, the literary and the mental; has shown that lyric verse may retain all

its charm and yet be expressed with epic dignity and range, and that the profoundest problems of human life may be presented in poetic form. In the conscientious attempt worthily to commemorate the character of a departed friend, he has made the memory of his own name as lasting as earth and time and the life of man.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Acheson's Mistress Davenant.
Acheson's Shakespeare and the Rival Poet.
Arnold's Essays in Criticism.
Bagehot's Literary Studies (Vol. II).
Beers's English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century.
Brooke's Early English Literature.
Brooke's Studies in Poetry.
Church's Life of Spenser.
Cook's English Prose and English Bible.
Cooke's Poets and Problems.
Courthope's Liberal Movement in English Literature.
Craik's Spenser and His Poetry.
Devey's Modern English Poets.
Dowden's Studies in Literature.
Earle's English Prose.
Genung's Tennyson's "In Memoriam."
Gosse's From Shakespeare to Pope.
Gummere's Old English Ballads.
Hunt's English Meditative Lyrics.
Hunt's English Prose and Prose Writers.
Hunt's (Leigh) Book of the Sonnet.
Lee's Life of Shakespeare.
Manly's English Poetry.
Massey's Shakespeare's Sonnets.
Masson's Wordsworth.
Morley's English Writers.

